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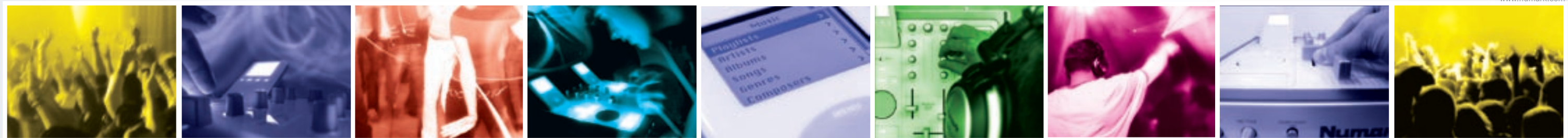
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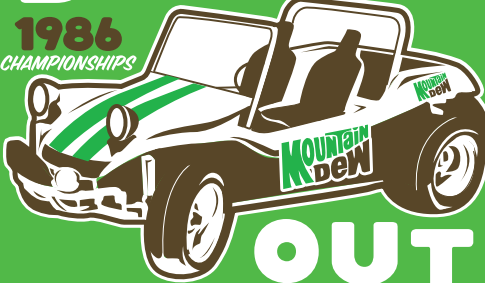


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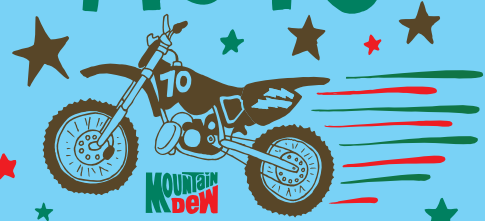
BUGGIN' OUT



Oh shoot! I need a Mountain Dew



MOTO CROSS



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## ED'S RANT ILL BANGERS

You would think after penning this editor's note for a year it would get easier. Dash off a few behind-the-scenes stories, explain why Lady Sovereign and Animal Collective are rad, and bam! Shit is done like Emeril's career.

In fact, the December column is always the hardest. The pressure to sum up a year of rowdy raving and hunkering down in the headphones gets to you, especially when you've been living—as most magazine folks do—on a schedule where you're always looking three months into the future. Hell, I'm already trying to figure out what I'll be listening to in March, and while I'm typing this Halloween hasn't even happened yet.

Instead, I racked my cortex and my ashtray-scented record bag for some of my favorite bangers of the year—at least, the ones I can remember.

### TOP 10 FOR THE CLUB...AND AFTER.

**1. Riko's verse on Lady Sovereign's "Random (Menta Rmx)" (Casual)** My friend says that hearing a really sick grime tune always makes him feel intensely jealous. I agree. Menta drops 23rd century hip-hop (reminiscent of Masta Ace's "Born To Roll") while the badman Riko calls out phony UK emcees down a scratchy telephone line from jail.

**2. Tittsworth EP (white)** Ex-d&b head Tittsworth really turns it out with fly Baltimore club remixes of Mike Jones' "Still Tippin'" and the squeaking mattress of Trillville's "Some Cut." The remix of go-go-sters Junkyard Band also bangs.

**3. Soulwax "Another Excuse (DFA Remix)" (PIAS)** Referencing Candi Staton's "You Got The Love," submarines and Ecstasy with a wicked ebb and flow, this could be the best eight minutes of the year.

**4. Adult. "Hold Your Breath" (Thrill Jockey)** Lace up your knee-high Doc Martens and prepare to smash skulls with this new school goth club anthem. Nothing sends shivers up the spine like Nicola shrilling "Hold your breath now/For a lifetime" over ultra-synthetic graveyard go-go handclaps.

**5. Modeselektor "Kill Bill Vol. 4" (Bpitch)** You know when you're going to some weird basement techno thing and you're being led down a dark hallway by some sketchy drugged-out German dude and all of a sudden he opens the door to the party and it's like pow! and the kick drums hit you in the face all at once? That's what this sounds like. It also reminds me of Mr. Oizo's "Flat Beat."

**6. DJ Mark 7 "New Shit" mix** The only thing better than the old Bay is the new Bay, as evidenced by Nump's "I Got Grapes," Bailey's "Fuck Yo Couch" and E-Feazy's "Da Dummy."

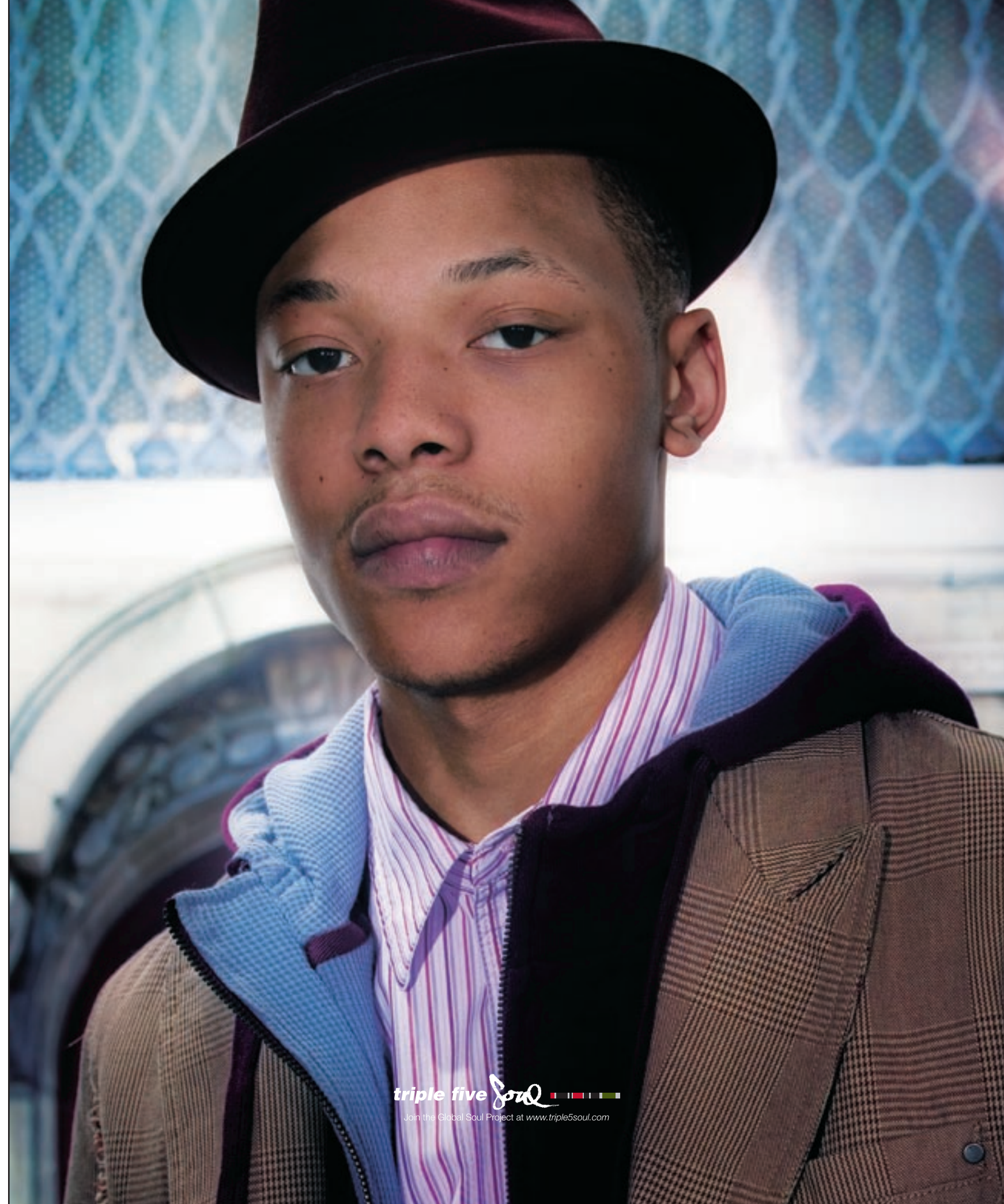
**7. Three 6 Mafia "Stay Fly" (Sony/BMG)** Catchy sped-up soul loop + neat raps + stuttering = drinks in the air + another Three 6 classic.

**8. Captain Comatose "Theme From Up In Flames" (Playhouse)** This track is one-minute long and if it was any longer I would have broken my booty. Faggy P-funk-influenced techno bass.

**9. Avenue D "You Love This Ass" (Phela)** I really wanted to hate Avenue D but with this number (and "2D2F") they nail the Miami bass/freestyle flow while Pete Heller creates unpredictable squiggly acid business in the background.

**10. Vanessinha Picatchu "Dança do Pikachu" (Essay)** Favela funk is guaranteed to detonate ass on the dancefloor, especially when the song is about Pikachu (the Pokemon character). My seven-year-old niece wishes she could rap this fierce.

- Vivian Host, Editor



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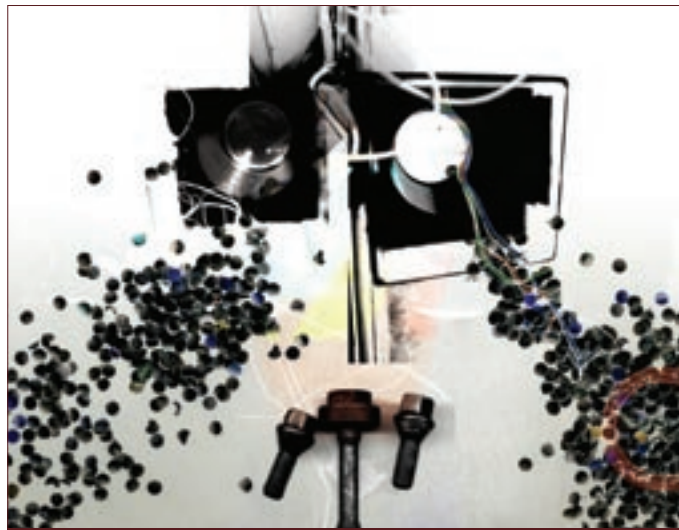
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**ON THE COVER:** Jamie Lidell poster design by Burlesque; original photo by Aubrey Edwards

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### BURLESQUE OF NORTH AMERICA

"It's like a goddamn Benetton ad up in here." Burlesque takes pride in its multi-culturalism, boasting a staff which is 1/6 African-American, 1/12 Asian, 1/6 Jewish, 1/12 Mexican, 1/6 Italian and 1/3 Caucasian. Perhaps this has helped shape their widely varied portfolio of album covers, skateboards, screenprinted concert posters, t-shirts, websites and paintings. Or not. Or whatever. Half of Burlesque is lookin' California, and the other half is feelin' Minnesota. They runnin' this rap shit.

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### JASON FRANK ROTHENBERG

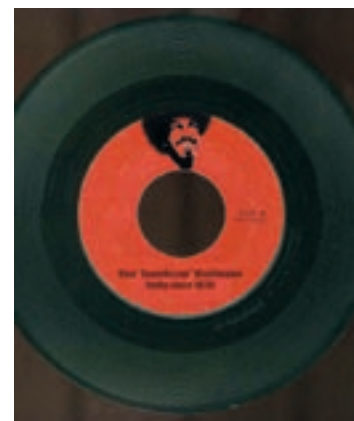
Jason Frank Rothenberg is a New York City-based photographer. Picturebox will publish a book of his collaborative work with the band Black Dice in the spring of 2006. It's called *Gore*. Jason shot Animal Collective for this issue. Jason's work is intimate, direct and uses natural backdrops and lighting.

[www.jasonfrankrothenberg.com](http://www.jasonfrankrothenberg.com)



### MAX HERMAN

Thanks to striking tracks like "Love's Gonna Get Cha" (Material Love)" by Boogie Down Productions, Max Herman has been immersed in hip-hop since childhood. By the time he reached college, this Chicago-based writer quickly realized the possibilities of covering the culture in print and began writing reviews of 12" singles. Today he faithfully writes about that good old boom-bap and just about anything else thrown his way for *XLR8R*, *Elemental*, *Impose*, *Illinois Entertainer*, *AllHipHop.com* and other fine publications.



### RICO WASHINGTON

Here's that class clown that used to set off stink bombs during gym. But since his exodus from his native Washington, D.C., this journalist/DJ/songwriter has been pimpin' a mean pen game in Gotham, USA. He currently serves as music editor for *Free* magazine, is the author of his own bi-monthly *XLR8R* column ("The Down-Beat Diaspora") and scribbles for rags like *Upscale*, *New York Moves* and *Wax Poetics*. Also, check for Rico's liner notes in the recently released DJ Jazzy Jeff CD, *The Soul Mixtape*.

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**AMPED 3**

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Jeremy Jones  
David Benedek  
Mikey LeBlanc  
Marc Frank Montoya  
Torah Bright  
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Travis Parker  
Gigi Ruff  
Nico Droz

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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advanced typography where we have to pick a publication we like and modify it some. We have to have a cover, table of contents and one article/spread, so it's not a complete issue obviously. Well, I love your zine, and I picked it for my project. The only problem is that I don't have a current issue to refer to and my subscription hasn't arrived yet. I was wondering if you could let me in on what kind of typefaces/fonts you have been using in the recent issues for the masthead, headlines, subheadlines, taglines, copy, etc. It would be a great help if you could give me some hints. Thanks for your time.  
XLR8R fan and designer in training,  
Ryan Snow

### Brianna responds:

Thanks for the compliments, Ryan. I must defer credit for the overall good looks of the magazine to our contributing illustrators and photographers. As far as the typefaces are concerned, let's just say my Top 5 Typefaces of 2005 are Glypha, Rockwell, Shelley, Giza and Chasline. Anything more than that, you'll have to bribe me—and I don't come cheap.

### Finntastic

I am a devoted fan of yours here in Finland. I hope you can cover more of our growing electronic scene. We have of course Sähkö, Nuspirit Helsinki and Four Corners Quartet, but also Sam & Gigi, Fanu and DJ Elliot Ness. It's a crazy experimental-meets-modern-jazz moment here. And come visit Koneisto Festival in my hometown, Turku, Finland, someday!

Mari Lehk

### Yuk It Up

Yo, XLR8R need my art...You can peep it here: [www.stensoul.com](http://www.stensoul.com). Lemme know what you are feelin'.

Peat Wollaeger

**Tomas responds:** Well, any artist who has a "dead fat comedians" stenciled skateboard series (John Belushi, John Candy etc.) gets at least a curious nod and perplexed scratch of the head. Nice work, Peat. Twisted, but nice.

### Graphic Havoc

Hi, I've been reading your magazine since about 1997. I just recently subscribed. Until now, I have been buying singular issues over the years. I'm a graphic design student at Texas State University. We have a project in

## XLR8R'S "HOLIDAY GRAB BAG" CONTEST

Win insane multimedia gear from Cakewalk, Activision, Adult Swim and Fat Cat!

With the colder months upon us and all the chaos Mother Nature has created, XLR8R decided we'd do something special for our Best of 2005 issue contest. Five incredible prizes can be yours for a song—or, at least, naming the correct song in the questions below. The cavalcade of gifts is topped off with Cakewalk's Project 5 (2.0) sequencing software, plus an Edirol PCR-1 keyboard controller. Project 5 is a set of superb quality instruments and effects (samplers, synths, drum machines); powerful recording, looping, sequencing and arranging tools; and the ultimate open synth host. Then we'll add Activision's intense *True Crime: New York*, a videogame where you run the streets of New York City as gangster-turned-street-cop Marcus Reed. The soundtrack features new songs from Redman, plus classics from Iggy Pop and Eric B & Rakim. After that, chill out and laugh with America's favorite fast-food superheroes in *Cartoon Network's Aqua Teen Hunger Force*. Finally, we'll toss in one of 2005's best albums, *Animal Collective's Feels (Fat Cat)*, which simply sounds like nothing else right now.

### Name the songs in the five questions based on the clues given.

1. Warped Aphex Twin track that featured a video of Richard D James as a bodacious trio of swimsuit models.
2. Song in which Lady Sovereign imitates a cash register.
3. Jamie Lidell sounds a hell of a lot like Sam Cooke on what album title track?
4. Reggae singer Fantan Mojah goes acoustic on what recent spiritual hit?
5. Soul troupe El Michels Affair's dubby paean to Isaac Hayes.

**One Grand Prize Winner will receive:** Project 5 Version 2 + Edirol PCR-1 controller/I/O plus Animal Collective CD, *Aquateen* DVD and Activision *True Crime* game

**Four First Prize Winners will receive:** Cakewalk Project 5 or Cakewalk Z3TA software plus Animal Collective CD, *Aquateen* DVD and Activision *True Crime* game

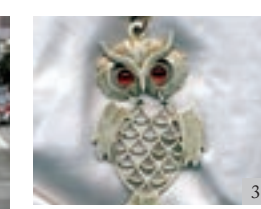
**Five Runners-up will receive:** Animal Collective CD, *Aquateen* DVD and Activision *True Crime* game

Entries will be accepted via mail and email. Entries must be received by Jan 6, 2006. Send your answers to XLR8R's "Holiday Grab Bag" contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email [contest@xlr8r.com](mailto:contest@xlr8r.com) with "Holiday Grab Bag" in the subject line.

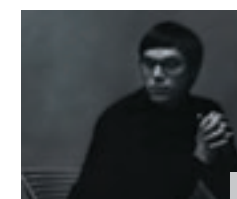
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## BJ "BITTER" BASTARD'S WORST OF 2005



Oh shit. There were so many lame things that happened this year that BJ "Bitter" Bastard's wizened, prune-like head is spinning like that little psycho bitch in *The Exorcist*. So BB sat down—pen in shaky, delirium tremens-addled hand—and picked out the most egregious offenders of 2005, and then detailed them here so you will never ever forget how wack this year was. Ever.



**1. Spin** In junior high, we read *Spin* and it was pretty decent. In the last year, it has become so thin it is practically a piece of toilet paper. It's full of crappy young Warped Tour bands whose names you forget five seconds after you read about them, and stuff like Coldplay. The worst part is all the party photos of them with "famous celebrities."

**2. Alter Ego "Rocker"** No more screeching techno anthems. No more Roman Flügel "Geht's Noch." No more "Motherfucker's gonna drop the pressssssure, mothafucka, mothafucka." No more "Rocker." When I'm drunk and trying to get my freak freak on with some hottie, this stuff gives me a headache and kills my game.

**3. Owl necklaces** Speaking of things that get your dick soft—those metal owl necklaces. They're always worn by gnome-y girls who look like extras from the movie *The Doors* and speak in tiny little sparrow voices and act like they're permanently on Quaaludes (not in a fun way). Does someone have a warehouse of these left over from '70s?

**4. The cult of Steve Aoki** Just because you have a rich dad and you start a half-decent record label doesn't mean you should be subjecting people everywhere to piss poor DJing and approximately 3,000 photos of you acting wild and karazy. It's getting ridiculous.

**5. A t-shirt and jeans** It's over, and not even freaking the formula-like wearing \$300 Evisus and light pink fitted tees—changes the fact. We're so bored we're only going to wear breeches and a codpiece for all of 2006.

**6. Young Jeezy Snowman shirts** If you are a hard-as-nails rap fan who thinks slinging crack is cool, why are you wearing a t-shirt with a clip art snowman on it? The only thing funnier than these pieces of infantile ghetto fab are the knockoffs.

**7. Talking about Myspace at parties** Only people who are truly cool can resist the temptation of Myspace. Everyone else checks it like a fiend and uses it to stalk people who are way too young for them and then feels nerdy and guilty about it. Except this weird breed of people that actually

thinks Myspace is cool—at parties they talk about it really loud so everyone around them can hear. Look, I'm not trying to admit to everyone that I met you on the internet, okay?

**8. Sneaker nerds** Guys who are really into limited edition Dunks look cuter than Trekkies or comic con dudes, but deep down they are exactly the same. Actually, they're worse. At least nerds do freaky shit like getting off on mascot costumes. All these guys do at parties is stand around talking about their shoes.

**9. Graffiti guys thinking they can make art** Graffiti is cool, especially when it's illegal as fuck and even when it looks shitty. But just because you can write your name in crazy places and you have a devil-may-care attitude does not mean that you should be painting canvases and hanging them in galleries. Thank god you're just doing it so all your buddies can go to the opening and drink for free.

**10. Track bikes** Track bike riders are the new vegans. They get all sanctimonious if you have brakes and they go to brunch with their pant legs rolled up and their chains around their waists so that even when they're not on their precious baby bikes people will know they're elite. And don't invite them to a party at your house or they will drop their noisy chains on the floor 400 times, drink all your beer and then piss their pants.





Veronica Lipgloss' frontwoman, Rhani (center), with dancers Shioban and Margaret

# VERONICA LIPGLOSS & THE EVIL EYES

A SAN FRANCISCO BAND TEARS THE HEART OUT OF GOTH PUNK.

WORDS: FRED MIKETA PHOTO: MORGAN HOWLAND

What's love got to do with music? In the case of Veronica Lipgloss and the Evil Eyes, the primal urgency of love is articulated via their mystical and sometimes absurd performances. A cut above the plethora of mediocre indie-glam bands, Lipgloss takes the heat of early '80s and '90s goth and projects it into their own unique homage to kindred spirits like Lydia Lunch, Siouxsie And The Banshees and The Slits.

VLEE's debut full-length, *The Witch's Dagger*, on Sonny Kay's Gold Standard Laboratories, takes the occult and twists it around in ways that mark the band as an isolated reservoir in a desert of Birthday Party-mimicking enthusiasts. "I feel the most prolific after I have experienced magical moments in life that are unordinary," says singer/bassist Rhani Remedés. "Life's weird turns and psychic events are the most inspiring to me."

Few bands are as obsessed with clairvoyant phenomena as Lipgloss. After passing drummer Andrew Netboy in the street, vocalist Remedés instantly recognized his unique energy and asked him if he'd like to work with the now-forming circle. The other half of the band consists of youthful guitarist/saxophonist James Caperton, synth/bassist Krispy and an entourage of debauched dancers.

"When I met everyone in the band, it was very mythical and spiritual," states Remedés. "I think that that's a big connection we all share. We all met each other through a sort of sixth sense."

Having toured with Gravy Train!!! and shared the stage with acts like Lesbians on Ecstasy, Veronica Lipgloss and the Evil Eyes pride themselves on their live show. Surrounded by a harem of dancers, with the crowd encouraged to bleed to the beat while the band detoxes the woes of the world, their performances give new meaning to the term cathartic. Remedés herself has a unique description of their live aesthetic: "A dancer in neon green short-shorts doing leg push-ups on the sweaty, dirty floor. Someone breaking their heel after doing some crazy dance move that requires flipping around. Cathartic dancing. Head-throwing. Some sort of whirlwind and glitter." Expect nothing short of divine intervention.

*The Witch's Dagger* is out now on Gold Standard Labs. [www.goldstandardlabs.com](http://www.goldstandardlabs.com)





## SALUTE: THE KLF

Techno's most wanted pay homage to the Justified Ancients of Mu-Mu.

Under a variety of alter egos, The KLF (Jimmy Cauty and Bill Drummond) disfigured music by The Beatles, Led Zeppelin and Abba. They juxtaposed the theme from *Dr. Who* with Gary Glitter samples to create a number one single in Britain, then wrote about it in *The Manual: How To Have A Number One The Easy Way*. They disrupted award shows by performing with Extreme Noise Terror and established The K Foundation, granting £40,000 for the worst exhibit at the Turner Prize art awards—double the amount that was being officially bestowed to the best exhibit. Most famously, they burnt £1 million on a Scottish island. Now The KLF is being celebrated with an album of cover versions by contemporary German musicians including Schaffhäuser, Glove and Ricardo Villalobos (whose attempt to get his head 'round the idea apparently produced his *The Au Harem D'Archimede* mini-album). Here, contributors to the album justify their love. *David Hemingway Illustration by E-Literit*

*Justified* was released in November via Blaou. [www.blaou.com](http://www.blaou.com), [www.klf-vs-deutschland.com](http://www.klf-vs-deutschland.com)



"The nature of pop music as mere capitalist goods was a main issue of their work. The fact that this rather 'concept art' approach ended up at the top of the world's charts instead of remaining in avant-garde art circles is what makes their body of work so unique and valid." *Justus Köhncke*

"Along with Pet Shop Boys, Pop Will Eat Itself and the early '90s Manchester scene, The KLF showed me the way out of rock & roll boredom. They were special because of their humor, because they didn't have any moral standards." *Mathias Schaffhäuser, Ware Records*

"The KLF were great—they were different and mysterious! Their attitude was special: something between anarchy and punk but in dance music." *Roman Boër, Tocadisco*

"The KLF not only reinvented sampling, they also excelled in guerrilla promotion. [They] were always breaking musical and communication barriers, [which is why], for our contribution, we chose a completely different musical style than we're typically known for, just to demonstrate our respect for the guys." *Jan Schlüter, Deichkind*

"Almost no one else in popular culture has combined art ideas, cheapness, conspiracy theories and hipster stances to create a form of pop music accessible to anyone, but layered with so many levels and hidden meanings. Although The KLF's ideas lost a bit of bite over the decades, and even though they weren't completely free of '70s hippie attitudes, they managed to never stain their work with boring reproduction." *Thies Mynther, Glove*



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# FANTAN MOJAH

FROM LUGGING SPEAKER CABINETS TO TOPPING THE REGGAE CHARTS.

WORDS: SARAH BENTLEY ILLUSTRATION: UPNORTH

Fantan Mojah is rapidly working his way through the ranks of Jamaica's new battalion of roots reggae soldiers. Selectors from across the globe continue to drop his two biggest hits to date—the socially conscious “Hungry” and the spiritually empowering “Hail To The King”—to a reception of horns, lighter flashing and reload requests. But in a genre where one-hit wonders are idiosyncratic (remember VC’s “By His Deeds”?), Fantan has far from secured his place in the reggae elite.

Speaking from Kingston, Fantan is “holding a vibe” with his Macka Tree cohorts, his crew of artists and right-hand men. He is eating steamed fish and bean stew from a calabash, a bowl made from natural materials (such as a coconut shell), in preparation for a studio session recording specials. Specials, re-recordings of hits with lyrics replaced to big up a DJ or soundsystem, are an essential source of income for Jamaican artists, particularly new ones like Fantan.

“They ease the pressure,” he admits. “I have nuff people to tend to. While you wait for advances and royalties they keep the bellies full.”

If its sales figures correspond to its quality, Fantan’s debut album *Hail To The King*, soon to be released on UK reggae imprint Greensleeves, should keep his family’s belly full for some time. Produced within Kingston’s Downsound Records camp, it’s a consistent, beautiful and lyrically disarming debut with guest beats from b-line maestros Bobby “Digital” Dixon, Donovan “Don Corleon” Bennett and In Da Street.

Like many reggae artists, Fantan cut his teeth by starting at the bottom. Following his dream to do music, he moved, as a teenager, from the idyllic countryside of St. Elizabeth—where he helped his dad with farm work—to the studio-saturated streets of Kingston.

“When I come to town I knew music wasn’t going to come straight so I was a baker,” says Fantan. “Then I start lift box (speaker boxes) for Killamanjaro [soundsystem] and that how I learn the business. They were good years. Hard work but I loved watching [MC/DJ] Ricky Trooper fire up a dance.”

After four years of lugging speaker cabinets, Fantan began establishing himself as an artist, performing at street dances in Kingston’s ghetto districts Tivoli Gardens, Jungle, Seaview and Trenchtown. During this time he recorded his first hit, the rallying “Search Until You Find,” which he still opens shows with today.

“The ghetto make you sing with feeling. And it feeling make you hit,” explains Fantan. “Nuff man can sing in Jamaica but few can find the hit. Now I find it, I must give thanks, show love and life will continue to shine on me same way.”

Fantan Mojah’s *Hail To The King* is out soon on Greensleeves.  
www.greensleeves.net



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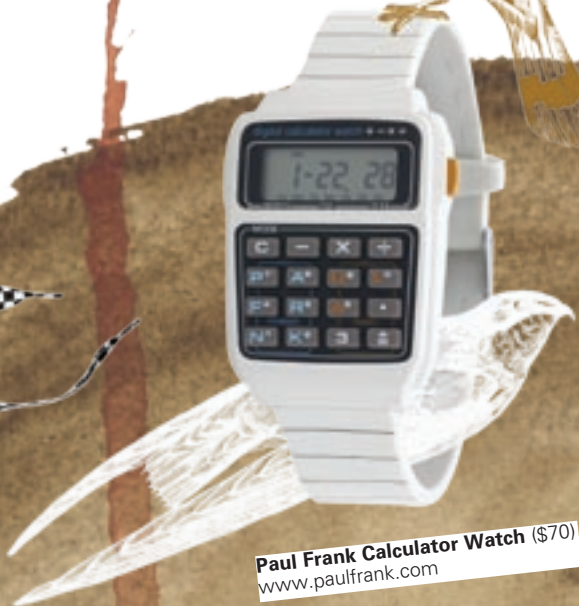


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# MIDAIRCONDO

## THREE SWEDES SEW ELECTRONIC BEATS WITH FOLKY THREAD.

WORDS: PATRICK SISSON PHOTO: PONTUS JOHANSSON

In 2002, Swedish musicians and longtime friends Malin Dahlström, Lisen Rylander and Lisa Nordström began formulating the idea for Midaircondo, a potent blend of electronic and acoustic improvisation. The scene could have been straight from a holiday greeting card.

“We met at my house in the middle of winter,” says Dahlström, “and it was quite funny because we were actually just planning to have some kind of knitting session and make big sweaters. We were in the kitchen and I was making some kind of cake, and we just started talking about all our different bands and what we wanted to do. It suddenly occurred to us that we should be doing music together.”

While there’s nothing sappy or sentimental about Midaircondo, it was still a fitting genesis for the band. Not because of antiquated gender associations between women and domestic duties, but because the intricate, delicate beauty of *Shopping for Images*, the trio’s Type Records debut, could have only come from a group so close to and comfortable with one another. “I think we listen a lot to each other,” offers Dahlström, “so if someone starts playing you have to immediately relate to that.”

Performing with an array of electronic equipment and live instruments—including woodwinds, saxophones and a piano—the three musicians appear to exert a gravitational pull on each other as they play, creating ebbing and flowing currents of noise. Songs slowly coalesce, including the pastoral piano piece “Serenade,” the exuberant “Perfect Spot” and the jumpy “Could You Please Stop,” which rides an acoustic bassline and tense synthesizers. Recorded by prolific Swedish glitch electronic producer Andreas Tilliander, *Shopping For Images* is a testament to the band’s stated goal of finding new and unexpected ways to create and present music.

It’s also not limited to the aural realm. When performing, the group manually manipulates projected visuals live—one of the highlights of their performance this year at Barcelona’s Sonar Festival. “You have five senses and you always use them,” explains Dahlström. “So if you come to a place or venue you’re always going to experience the room, whether you think about it or not. We want to utilize that.”

*Shopping for Images* is out now on Type. [www.typerecords.com](http://www.typerecords.com)



Midaircondo: Lisen Rylander, Lisa Nordström and Malin Dahlström

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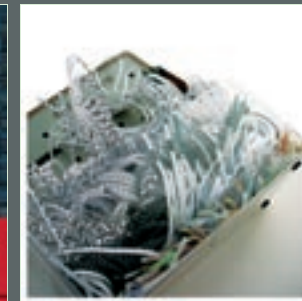
Jean-Emmanuel Krieger draws on the Krautrock and psychedelia records that informed his childhood for his debut LP, recorded in several countries and featuring live drums by Lee Adams of Imitation Electric Piano.

**Múm**  
*Yesterday Was Dramatic, Today Is OK*  
Morr Music



“Recorded just after we became a four people band, in a tiny, sweaty room in the summer of 1999 with carpenters banging nails around us. Sometimes we put on headphones so we couldn’t hear them.” Orvar Smarason

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Murals and signs painted by Nicolas "Bones" Williams, Greenwich Farm, Jamaica



## BONES BRIGADE

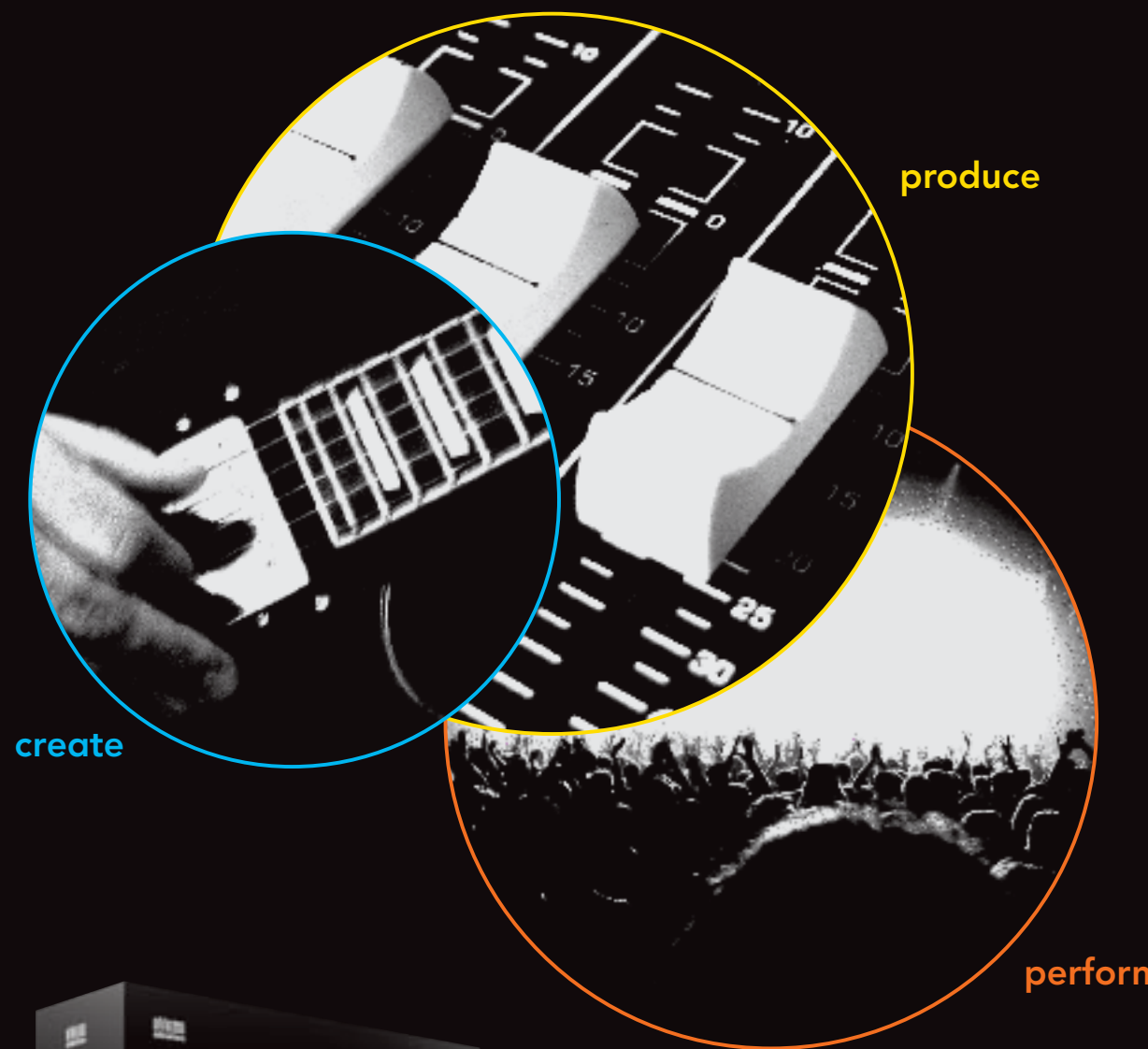
A Jamaican muralist chronicles life and death on the walls of Greenwich Farm.

In 1975, when graphic artist Nicolas "Bones" Williams was born, Greenwich Farm was a cool hangout spot where ghetto "sufferers" and genteel uptown folk alike ventured daily in search of roast fish or strong herb. A legendary locale for fans of Jamaican music, Greenwich Farm has been home to countless outstanding figures, from ska star Derrick Morgan and hit-making producer Bunny Lee to roots crooner Max Romeo and renowned deejay Tappa Zukie; early dancehall labels such as Roots Tradition and Cornerstone were also based there. Unfortunately, since the dawning

of the ragga era at the end of the '80s, the area has been blighted by a particularly Jamaican form of urban decay. Politically motivated violence linked to the illicit cocaine trade has dramatically escalated, rendering Greenwich Farm a community under siege. By the time Bones picked up a paintbrush at the age of 15, the neighborhood was already becoming abandoned and dangerous.

Bones' artwork currently graces most of the walls of Greenwich Farm: there are functional decorations for beauty parlors, electrical repair shops, liquor joints and food stalls, as well as signage for the

local church; other walls celebrate Sizzla and Beenie Man. By far his most striking works are his many memorials to Greenwich Farm's fallen heroes, such as teenager Shana Palmer, who was gunned down by automatic weapons at a friend's birthday party, or Mama Dimple, a respected Rastafarian elder who also passed on prematurely. "My work serves to celebrate the dead," says Bones in summary, "but also to uplift the living." *David Katz*



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# NATHAN FAKE

A "COUNTRY BUMPKIN" MELDS PROG HOUSE WITH LEFTFIELD SUPERSONICS.

WORDS: DAVID HEMINGWAY ILLUSTRATION: MAXIMILLIAN BODE

"Yes, my name really is Nathan Fake," confirms the UK-based *wunderkind* and "country bumpkin" whose beguiling, mildly pastoral take on techno has seduced the likes of Superpitcher, Adam Beyer and Rob Da Bank (into the inclusion of his tracks on mix albums), as well as Kompakt's Michael Mayer, Steve Barnes and Dominik Eulberg (into remixing him). Far from aiming to deceive, a series of charming 12"s for James Holden's Border Community, Satoshi Tomiie's Saw Recordings and the Cologne-based Traum have been strangely heartfelt, revealing the history of the youthful music maker.

The "Watlington Street" EP (Saw Recordings) was named after the Reading, UK street that Fake lived on at the time of the five tracks' creation, while its gnarly opening track, "Adam Edge," finds Fake referencing a childhood mate. "Adam Edge is a dear friend of mine from

Norfolk," clarifies Fake. "It was one of the first proper tunes I ever made. I thought it'd be nice to name a track after him as he's a good lad. He's a policeman now." Meanwhile, a track named "Overdraft" seems self-explanatory for this music production student.

Perhaps Fake's most seductive number of all is "The Sky Was Pink" (Border Community); its four versions are cut through with trace elements of My Bloody Valentine, M83 and Boards of Canada, but it is equally a club record. The track's origins, however, are far removed from any dancefloors. "It comes from when we used to camp out in fields when I was younger," recalls Fake of the inspiration for the blissed-out bit. Meanwhile, a clicky, drone-infused Icelandic mix of "The Sky Was Pink" could easily be taken for an homage to Múm and Sigur Rós. Not so.

"Icelandic' is just the name of the brand of tent we slept in," claims Fake. "That version of the song was just meant to be something else to put on the vinyl, like a more DJ-friendly version of the original."

On the subject of DJing, Fake's website resolutely states the he is "not a DJ, never has been and probably never will be." "It's nothing against DJs," shrugs Fake. "It's just that when my first record came out, I suddenly got a lot of DJ gig offers, which I found a bit weird. I wrote that on my website so that people would stop emailing me [about] DJ gigs. I keep meaning to take it down."

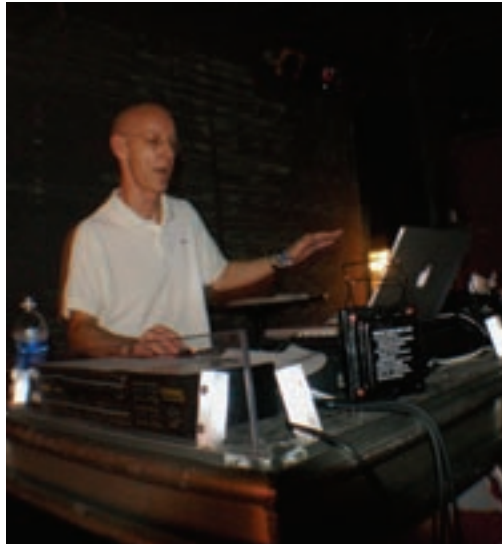
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Clockwise from bottom left: the crowd at Chop Suey, Bruno Pronsato and Deadbeat, Thomas Fehlmann, festival-goers Aumelia and Rita, Nudge, festival workers Sara Jayne and Nan  
PHOTOS: Roseann Barnhill



## EVEN LOUDER

In its second year, Seattle's Decibel Festival pumps up the jams.

Seattle, Washington's weekend-long **Decibel Festival** just turned two years old on September 22, but already it boasted an impressive roster of boundary-pushing techno artists—Akufen, Thomas Fehlmann, Fennesz, Lusine and Tim Hecker—on par with the line-ups of established festival giants like Mutek and DEMF/Fuse:In. For Portland DJs Derek Fisher and The Perfect Cyn, DB highlights included an Ableton Live clinic, Deadbeat's deep and dubby live set at Neumo's, spinning at the Barca DJ Lounge and Saturday's searing afterhours party Krakt, where they raged 'til 5 a.m. to "seriously warped minimal techno" from Tim Xavier & Camea, plus local favorites Jerry Abstract, Kris Moon and Kristina Childs. Tanya Lutman, who helped coordinate the festival, was blown away by M3rck's Thursday night showcase at Chop Suey, where Machinedrum served up "enthraling tripped-out hip-hop" and Proem chilled things out. Elsewhere, Fennesz wowed audiences at the Broadway Theatre by combining lush atmospherics with self-made visuals, and those still awake by Sunday were treated to panels (Relationships Between Art and Technology, Mastering For Vinyl) and showcases featuring Aeroc, Tipper, Isolée and Pan American. Clearly a must for techno heads of the West, Decibel is quickly on its way to becoming a yearly destination for fans of intricate electronic sounds. *Tyra Bangs (with reporting by Cynthia Valenti, Derek Fisher and Tanya Lutman)*

www.dbfestival.com



## INSANE IN THE MEMBRANE

Paper Rad creates Day-Glo fantasies for fucked up childhoods.

Somewhere in the backwoods of Vermont there is an asylum for kids the '80s forgot: the boy who played so much *Qbert* he started seeing everything as a series of blocks, the girl who ingested the hair of 100,000 troll dolls, the gay twins who (after huffing too much hot pink tempera paint) turned a McDonald's Hamburglar toy into a fierce killing machine. Required reading at this place—where, despite being adults by now, everyone still wears shrunken *Tetris* t-shirts and crazy-patterned Zoobas wrestling pants—is the new book, ***BJ and Da Dogs*** (softcover; PictureBox Inc., \$29.95). Emerging from the Technicolor loins of Pittsburgh/Western Massachusetts-based design trio Paper Rad, said book is a post-traumatic electronic childhood acid trip extended and remixed over 224 pages of eye-ripping illustrations, photos, poems printed with Mac SE fonts and comics featuring triangle-nosed insomniacs and gay computers. When the kids read it, they get strangely agitated, but in a good way. And somewhere in the background, Timbuk 3's "The Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades" softly weeps. *Bradley Milton*  
www.paperrad.org, www.pictureboxinc.com





# GIANT PANDA

HIP-HOP PURISTS AIM FOR THE SKY.

WORDS: MAX HERMAN PHOTO: ERIC COLEMAN

LA-based trio Giant Panda's name alone is peculiar enough to turn heads. Yet as random as it sounds, there is a meaning behind one of the oddest monikers in hip-hop. "It fits us literally, being black and white and from Asia," explains MC/co-producer Newman. "And I feel like we're bringing something that's rare or endangered to the table."

Like the elusive giant panda bear of China, this multiracial crew (Newman, MC/producer Chikaramanga and MC Maanumental) is somewhat of a rarity in their own territory. With sample-driven singles like "With It," Giant Panda has helped keep the roots of hip-hop alive without falling into an old school rut. "I think it's really easy to be a purist but yet still make forward-thinking music," says

Newman. "The fundamentals of it shouldn't be the gimmick—they should just be means that you're using to get to another end."

What began as dorm room beat-making sessions between friends quickly grew into a sound cohesive enough to catch the ears of Pete Rock and Marley Marl—both of whom gave radio play to Giant Panda's first single, "88 Remix." It was their move into LA (from suburban Pomona, CA, and Seattle respectively) that initially helped solidify their potential as a group. Here, they met neighbor Thes One from People Under The Stairs, who assisted the crew in recording "88 Remix," and who ultimately took them under his wing. "Having somebody who was already established seeing what we were trying to do and being into it gave us more confidence like, 'Okay, we can do this,'" says Newman.

This year, under Chikara's own Tres Records, Giant Panda released their debut, *Fly School Reunion*. From the humorous, high BPM energy of "Racist" to the chill, melodic vibes of "With It," this album gave fans a proper display of their slightly off-kilter brand of party-starting hip-hop. As Maanumental says of the album's release, "It kind of validates what we've been doing up to this point."

While Giant Panda has caught the attention of plenty of true school heads, they plan to extend their reach by using more accessible hooks that anyone could recognize. "Fly School Reunion is trying to reunite people that are in the know of what we're talking about—old school stuff like the '90s—but I want to make something that my little cousins can sing," says Maanumental.

*Fly School Reunion* is available now on Tres. [www.tresrecords.com](http://www.tresrecords.com)



Giant Panda: Maanumental, Chikaramanga and Newman

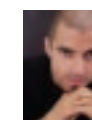
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Stills from *So Wrong They're Right* (far left and near left), *The Other Side, Paris* (below left) and *World Traveller Adventures* (below)



## ADVENTURES IN STEREO

Tyra Bangs tours the world with three new music DVDs.

### WORLD TRAVELLER ADVENTURES (Uncivilized World/Koch Vision; \$19.98)

In a scrappy style that mimics its subject matter, *World Traveller Adventures* documents the real romance of rave. Four short films follow British and French free party crews as they ready caravans of trucks and turntables and travel to Sarajevo, India and Africa bringing the party to the people. The DVD is interesting as a travelogue, but truly becomes gripping when it deals with the larger context of political protest. Far more than just tripped-out techno hippies, *WTA* captures soundsystems like Spiral Tribe, Desert Storm and Sound Conspiracy as they reclaim public space and bring the spirit of free partying to war-torn areas. Only for the hardcore.

[www.uncivilizedworld.com](http://www.uncivilizedworld.com)

### SO WRONG THEY'RE RIGHT (Other Cinema; \$24.95)

"This is not just a chronicling of an underground network of 8-track eccentrics," intones the opening narration of *So Wrong They're Right*. "This is a statement of active outrage...from a group of people who have opted out of a disposable consumer culture." Bullshit. Total bullshit. Originally released in 1993, this film by the dorks (*8-Track Mind* magazine's Russ Forster and Dan Sutherland) for the dorks, introduces perhaps America's most autistic music collectors who, out of nostalgia (or sheer cheapness), have become obsessed with buying and trading 8-track tapes from the '70s and '80s. Watching this DVD is at times akin to listening to the class nerd give a book report on his new *Superman* comic, but funny music and interesting graphical treatments keep the humor deadpan.

[www.othercinema.com](http://www.othercinema.com)

### THE OTHER SIDE (Deaf Dumb & Blind; \$18.98)

The people behind the Breakbeat Science record store and the AM Only DJ Agency team up with left-field travel guides *Time Out* for a series of combo DVDs/mix CDs that purport to show travelers the hidden side to cities including New York, Paris and London. With the feel and graphic design sensibility of the Travel Channel's more cutting-edge shows, viewers follow Casey Spooner of Fischerspooner, the Blackstrobe boys and Crosstown Rebels' Damian Lazarus around their respective cities. The quality of each installment depends on your tour guide—in London you visit a dog racetrack in Walthamstow and daytime warehouse party Plug-In, Paris stops include vintage store En Ville and Ivan Smaghe's Le Pulp residency, while NYC visits rather more predictable foci: Alife's Rivington Club sneaker store, summer hotspot PS1 and Moby's LES mainstay Teany. A *Time Out* guide come to life...if you need that sort of thing.

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\*Dark Water available 12/26.  
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# EL MICHEL'S AFFAIR

BROOKLYN CATS CREATE VINTAGE FUNK WITH A DOSE OF BLUE-EYED SOUL.

WORDS: RICO "SUPERBIZZEE" WASHINGTON PHOTO: ROSTARR

At the popular NYC nightclub S.O.B.'s, a classic hip-hop moment is underway. Wu-Tang disciple Raekwon is spitting his greatest hits and misses over live, funk-laden interpretations of RZA's soundscapes by funk/soul band El Michels Affair. With the sinewy funk stew cooking on stage, you'd swear they were *sho' nuff* old school vets. But unless you're hip to the scene, the group's racial composition might jar you. "When Raekwon walked in [rehearsal], he was a little shocked," recalls Truth & Soul Records co-founder/engineer Jeff Silverman. "People assume they're old records." Co-founder/saxophonist Leon "El" Michels has a similar account. "This journalist heard the [Mighty Imperials] record and thought we were a group of 60-year-old black dudes. Then he came to our show and was like, 'I don't know about this.'"

Comprised of a loose collective of musicians, El Michels Affair is but one of their many *noms de plume*—the group is the intersection of members of The Expressions, Bama & The Family, Cosmic Force, Bronx River Pkwy, The Mighty Imperials and JD & The Evil's Dynamite Band. And like it or not, these 20-something white kids are waxing poetic all over your preconceived notions of soul. "Half of Booker T. & the MG's was white," cites drummer/bassist Nick Movshon. "The Atlantic Records session guys too."

While they can't claim Muscle Shoals lineage, they are indeed third generation throwback soul heirs. Confused? Check the family tree. In 1997,

soul aficionados Phillip Lehman and Gabriel Roth formed Desco Records, pioneering the trend of reissuing obscure soul tracks. Fast forward to 2000—Roth and Lehman split to form Daptone Records (Sharon Jones & the Dap Kings) and Soul Fire (Lee Fields), respectively. In 2002, Lehman makes his exodus from the business; his pupils become beneficiaries of his musical estate.

Taking a cue from pre-blaxploitation film *Putney Swope*, Lehman's pupils dub their budding branch of the tree Truth & Soul. And parallel to the film's plot, Truth & Soul's mission was to shake up the system. "We wanted to cover everything and work with other people, not just put out soul music," says Silverman. "With Soul Fire, the way Philip ran things was very militant." But with recent guests at their Williamsburg digs in the form of Masters at Work's Kenny "Dope" Gonzales, Fatman Scoop and Lauryn Hill, it's evident that the changing of the guard involves remixing the funky precedent.

El Michels Affair's *Sounding Out The City* is out now on Truth & Soul/Fastlife. [www.truthandsoulrecords.com](http://www.truthandsoulrecords.com)

El Michels Affair: Homer Steinyeiss, Thomas Brenneck, Nick Movshon, Sean Solomon, Toby Pazner (standing), Leon Michels (at organ); Not pictured: Michael Leonhart, Aaron Johnson

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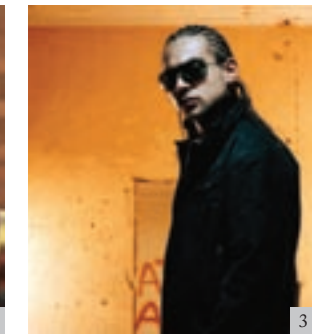
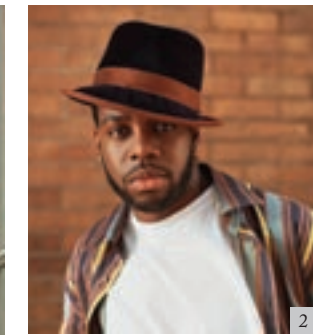
- A BASHAR | 'CREATURE'
- B VARIOUS ARTISTS | 3 NEW RELEASES
- C PIER BUCCI | 'FAMILIA'
- D CAJMERE FEAT. DAJAE | 'SAY YOU WILL'
- E FRED EVERYTHING | 'HOUSE OF OM'
- F GABRIEL & DRESDEN | 3 NEW RELEASES
- G SLOK | 'LONELY CHILD'
- H RUI DA SILVA | 'LIXUMERNOS' (INCLUDES MARTINEZ MIX)
- I LOUDERBACH | 'ENEMY LOVE'
- J MISWAX RECORDS
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## SPIN CYCLE

News and gossip from the music world

**Sean Paul** eclipsed Damien "Jr. Gong" Marley's highest single week sales for a reggae album with *The Trinity*, which debuted at number seven on the Billboard charts and sold 107,000 copies. **Students Taking Action Now: Darfur (STAND)** staged an international "Darfur Fast" on October 6 at 200 college campuses. Students were encouraged to fast by giving up their time and everyday purchases to generate money and awareness to stop the atrocities in Sudan ([www.standnow.org](http://www.standnow.org)). Free online mixes featuring tracks by **Carl Craig**, **Wahoo** and **Chez Damier** by Cocoon Club and Stir-15 madman **C-Rock** can be downloaded at [www.c-rock.net](http://www.c-rock.net). SF's top desi crew **Dhamaal (Janaka Seleka, Maneesh The Twister)** continue to awe club audiences with their DJing and event productions, which feature the entire gambit of South Asian electronic music styles alongside classical percussionists. Their music has been featured on BBC, NPR and MTV Desi! [www.dhamaalsf.com](http://www.dhamaalsf.com) **Futuremusic.com** reports that iTunes and other digital music retailers plan to raise their price per file to \$1.29 or \$1.49 in 2006. This follows pressure from the major labels to raise prices and **Beatport.com's** announcement at the Billboard Dance Summit that they are selling 50,000 tracks per month at \$1.99 each. **Motorola's iRadio** system will let users save Internet radio streams or their own MP3s to their Motorola cell phone. Audio can then be routed via Bluetooth to a car stereo and controlled directly on the stereo faceplate. See more at [www.motorola.com/iradio](http://www.motorola.com/iradio). **Madita** is the latest offering from Vienna downtempo label Couch, home of Dzihan & Kamien. Have a listen at [www.couchrecords.com/madita](http://www.couchrecords.com/madita). Chicago emcee **Soulstice** (who has a Master's Degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering and holds down a position at the Department of Defense) drops *North By Northwest*

on *Wandering Soul*, produced by Oddisee (who has worked with J-Live, Jazzy Jeff and Talib Kweli). [www.wanderingsoul.com](http://www.wanderingsoul.com) New York rapper **Jin** won \$50,000 at the annual Fight Klub emcee battle in the Bahamas. The seven-time BET *Freestyle Friday* victor's new album on Draft Records is out now (see feature review this issue). Rumor has it **Gold Chains** and **Vladislav Delay** have been working together on tracks for GC's forthcoming record. **Sue Cie** also has a DVD due out with Delay's lady, **Antye Greie-Fuchs** (a.k.a. Laub), in February. For the latest **grime videos**, check [www.videosonroad.com](http://www.videosonroad.com). Speaking of grimesters, Brazil's **Bruno Belluomini** is making noise with his mixes featuring tracks by Slaughter Mob, Scuba and Ruff Squad. Belluomini runs several weekly and monthly clubs and radio shows. [www.submusica.com/brunobelluomini](http://www.submusica.com/brunobelluomini) **Basic**, a portal for live and archived DJ sets, presents tons of great online electronic music streams, from techno to D&B and dancehall. [www.basic.ch](http://www.basic.ch). On October 28 fans flocked to Amsterdam for another big **Kindred Spirits Weekender** to see live acts like **Dwele**, Dego & Kaidi Tatham, **Rich Medina**, Liquid Spirits, **Roisin Murphy** and Sleepwalker featuring Bembe Seque. Big show! [www.kindred-spirits.nl](http://www.kindred-spirits.nl). Everyone's favorite funk doctor, **Redman**, headlines an eclectic NYC-inspired soundtrack for Activision's **Crime: New York City** videogame with two all-new original songs and "Rush The Security" from his November album *Red Gone Wild* (Def Jam). **Dub-breakbeat veterans Dreadzone's** new release *Once Upon A Time* is out now as a download album. Check [www.dreadzone.com](http://www.dreadzone.com). Bay Area rap legend **B-Legit** has released his sixth album, *Block Movement*, on his label, SMC. [www.smcrecordings.com](http://www.smcrecordings.com)

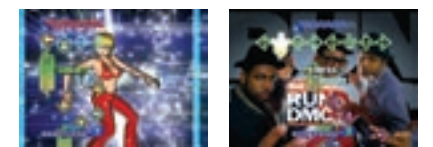
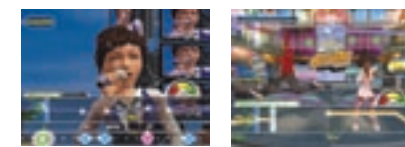
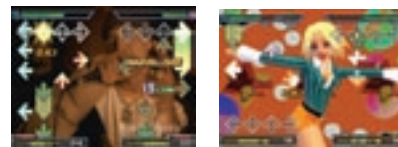
1. Madita; 2. Dwele; 3. Sean Paul; 4. Sue Cie and Antye Greie-Fuchs; 5. students involved in STAND; 6. Roisin Murphy; 7. B-Legit



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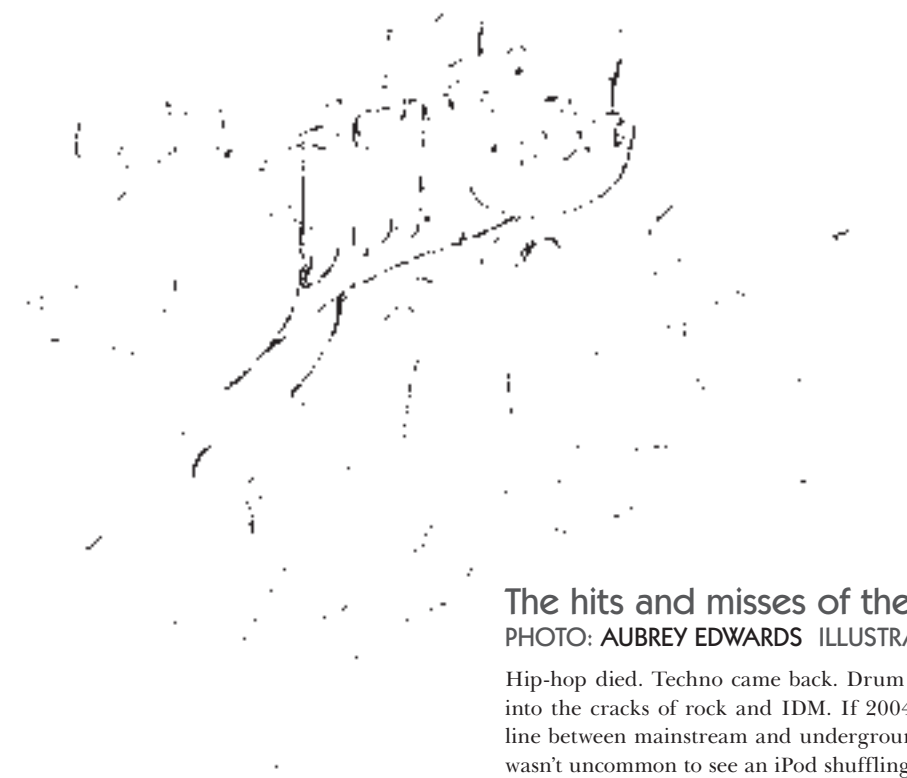


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## The hits and misses of the year in music, art and technology.

PHOTO: AUBREY EDWARDS ILLUSTRATION: BURLESQUE OF NORTH AMERICA

Hip-hop died. Techno came back. Drum & bass rose from the grave and folk influences seeped into the cracks of rock and IDM. If 2004 broke down barriers between genres—and blurred the line between mainstream and underground—then 2005 washed away those barriers completely. It wasn't uncommon to see an iPod shuffling through Devendra Banhart and Ghostface, Audion and The Arcade Fire, Three 6 Mafia and Wiley. While some grouched about rock's oversaturation (Mars Volta on MTV? 12-year-olds in Misfits tees?), tour stops by artists from Prefuse 73 to Isolée to LCD Soundsystem were more packed than ever, pushing the boundaries of electronic music further outward while proving the genre is here to stay. For our fourth annual Best of poll, we left the dance-floor long enough to ask distinguished panel of artists, label owners, graphic designers, writers and friends about their highlights (and lowlights) of this year. As usual, they came through with on-point commentary and some excellent tips about what lies ahead. Drum roll please! *Vivian Host*

### Best Artist of 2005: Jamie Lidell

He's the consummate electronic artist/entertainer; he's a good singer and a good live performer with a credible experimental electronic background. As the voice of SuperCollider (with Cristian Vogel), he proposed an alternate universe where techno, experimental electronics and R&B could co-exist. With his latest album, he eschews all expectations and just does what he wants, keeping it pure, soulful and honest. *G. Rizo, Repellent Magazine*

I have liked his stuff from the early technoid club days until today. He never stands still and is always reaching for musical changes and this makes his output so surprising. Plus, he is the best performer around in electronic music right now. *Thomas Venker, Onitor*

On *Muddlin' Gear*, Lidell gave us a sonic example of outerspace insects in the throng of a debauchorous orgy; it was glitchy, weird and sometimes unlistenable. So who would have thought this white British boy would come back channeling the undead ghosts of Stevie Wonder and Prince, and the actual ghosts of Otis Redding and Sam Cooke? *Multiply* is a soul/

IDM album even your mom can get down to. *Leslie Hermelin, Mute Records*

An obvious choice. This guy can deliver the sickest improv electronic act I've ever witnessed and then give you a smoother than silk record to drag your ass home to and recover from his live madness. *Mike Shannon, Cynosure*

Jamie Lidell borrowed a silk cocoon from Missy Elliott and transformed himself into a smooth-singing, unironic funk and soul man, gliding and shouting through productions that sit equally at home on the dock of the bay or the top floor of the metropolitan skyscraper. Who knew this messy techno nerd was a kindred soul of both Sam Cooke and Prince? *Rob Geary, XLR8R staff writer*

I respect Jamie most for taking risks by putting out records that people don't expect, and then having the charisma to charm an audience of 3,000 raved-out mostly-Spaniards with an acapella intro at his Sonar show. *Sue Cie, Gold Chains & Sue Cie*





**BEST OF 2005**  
**BY RICHARD REED PARRY,**  
**Arcade Fire/Bell Orchestre**

**Best Artist:** Islands (ex-Unicorns). Watch for it.

**Best Album:** Antony and The Johnsons' *I am a Bird Now*. Oh, what a precious, precious piece of work. Hooray for courage in music.

**Best Live Event:** Joanna Newsom at the Sasquatch Festival. What a magical performer. Live, her voice is twice what it is on record. I was reduced to tears like six or seven times during her set! Oh, and every single one of her fingers was bleeding by the end.

**Best Venue:** The Paramount, Seattle. This is the most beautiful concert hall. It's super ornate, almost classical—it looks like an opera theater, but they have rock shows here! Apparently it's owned by a wealthy arts patron who put loads of money into restoring it and maintaining it.

**2006 Music Prediction:** Final Fantasy. If this man doesn't become a household name, then truly there is no god.



**BEST ALBUMS OF 2005**  
**BY HER SPACE HOLIDAY,**  
**Wichita/Mush**

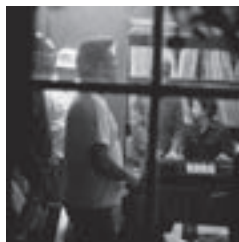
1. **The Spinto Band** *Nice and Nicely Done* (Bar None)
2. **Devendra Banhart** *Cripple Crow* (XL/Beggars)
3. **Animal Collective** *Feels* (Fat Cat)
4. **Wolf Parade** *Apologies to the Queen Mary* (Sub Pop)
5. **Broken Social Scene** *Broken Social Scene* (Arts & Crafts)

## BEST ARTIST



**Isolée** From his astonishing, shape-shifting album *We Are Monster* to his radical remixes for the likes of Recluse and Tiga, Isolée proved that even within the constraints of a genre as delimited as “minimal techno,” there's ample room for experimentation. By rethinking every aspect of the form, from the timbre to the chord progressions, he bends the genre to his will and creates tracks that think out loud. *Philip Sherburne, XLR8R staff writer*

Isolée's *We Are Monster* showed the variety and open-mindedness of electronic dance music in 2006, minimal and retro at the same time. *DJ T., Get Physical*



**Fat Freddy's Drop** These dudes from New Zealand did one of the most surprising and stunning albums this year. If you're a fan of Transmat techno, roots reggae and Lee Scratch Perry's dub, you've got to love this! *Daniel Rérat, Neuton*

**Wighnomy Brothers** This East German duo is destined to be huge—everyone from Michael Mayer to Akufen to Superpitcher to Dominik Eulberg has caned 'em on mix discs this year, but they've yet to put out a proper album! *Brock Phillips, Motormouthmedia*



**The Arcade Fire** Amazing that something not completely crap can become large, and it makes me feel good about wearing my brown cardigan. *Greg DL, Best Kept Secret*

**E-40** E-Feasible continues to impress in his role as Ambassador for the Bay with his solo hits (“Da Dummy” is beyond ridiculous), but he's got comp in his own home: his teenage son Droop-E has made some of the year's hottest beats. *Yee! Ross Hogg, XLR8R staff writer*

**Who Made Who** Three guys from Copenhagen whose album just came out on Gomma. Wicked punk-funk with actual songs—the best live dance music I have heard and seen to date. *Dominique Kegan, The Glass*



**Diplo** Spinning, helping popularize baile funk, going out with M.I.A. and dropping a solid *Fabriclive* disc. That sounds like a good year to me. *Patrick Sisson, XLR8R writer*

**Slug** Between his work with the Felt project and Atmosphere, the man deserves the praise he is getting and much more. *Brett Cleaver, Offshore Recordings*

**Prefuse 73** Scott Herren for consistency and prolificness, starting the year with *Piano Overlord* and following it with the epic *Surrounded by Silence* and then my favorite, the *Reads the Books* EP. *Will Stichter, Saxon Shore*

## WORST ARTIST



**The Bravery** They seem like an example of what happens when guys get together and start a band in order to get laid. *Nicola Kuperus, Adult.*

Never has a band so quickly made me question my own tastes in music. There was a time when I would proudly show off my record collection and claim that New Wave was one of my longtime favorite genres, and now every time I hear a Bravery song I sink in my chair and consider selling my white belt. *Dustin Amery Hosteller, U/ps0/Faesthetic*

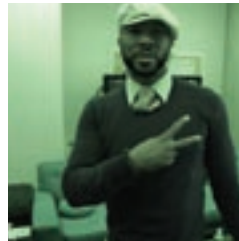
**The Redwalls** Over-hyped, over-exposed derivative mediocrity. Big-budget publicity at its most effective and worst. *Jamie Proctor, Thrill Jockey*



**Black Eyed Peas** Has there ever been a bigger case of undeserved overexposure and media-whoring than the BEPs? *Daniel Gill, Fanatic Promotion*

**Princess Superstar** This kind of poseur/fashionista deejaying is exactly what is wrong with the scene. The fact that someone with so little talent can get so much attention (err, hype). *Luke McKeehan, Nordic Traxx*

## BEST ALBUM



**Common Be (Geffen)** One of the best hip-hop records I've heard in years. *Ken Dyber, Aesthetics*

My god—a coherent and consistent hip-hop album! Kanye and Com are a producer/MC team unrivaled since the golden age of Gang Starr, and together they made one of the most down-to-earth and just plain *real* hip-hop albums ever. *DJ Language, Negrolash/BBE Records*

**Platinum Pied Pipers** *Triple P (Ubiquity)* Touches all areas of what I like—it's soulful, funky, electronic, jazzy, future and retro all at the same time. *“Mad” Mats Karlsson, Raw Fusion*



**LCD Soundsystem** *LCD Soundsystem (DFA/Astralwerks)* After wearing the grooves flat on the entire Beatles/Bowie/Kraftwerk/Talking Heads/The Fall discographies, Murphy turned to his own drum machines and cowbells for more, leaving stale discopunk in the dust with his hyperactive, obsessively produced gems. *Rob Geary, XLR8R staff writer*

**Sage Francis** *A Healthy Distrust (Epitaph)* The entire album is brimming with thick, distorted production and equally dense, acidic and expressive lyrics delivered with perfect tonal precision. Painstakingly written, forcefully delivered—worth a hundred listens. *Caleb Mueller (Decomposure), Unschooled Records*



**Gang Gang Dance** *God's Money (Social Registry)* I've become totally fascinated with the latest from Brooklyn's mucho improved Gang Gang Dance. They make tepid New Age synth textures sound both threatening and enchanting and I love to listen to them when I go jogging. *Christopher Richards, Ris Paul Ric (ex-Q and Not U)*

**Run The Road (Vice)** Listening to this is like smashing yourself in the head with a frying pan while trying to order a pint in a crowded London pub, but it is a welcome new sound in a sea of formulaic hip-hop. *Barney Waters, Puma*



**Deadbeat** *New World Observer (~scape)* By far the most listened-to album of the year for me and his best work to date. A producer that uses all the right dubwise influences then adds his own signature: digital atmospheres, sultry vocals and layers of organic rhythm. *Mike Shannon, Cynosure*

**Roots Manuva** *Awfully Deep (Big Dada)* A penetrating, exposing and painfully honest insight into the schizo mindset of the UK's most respected leftfield rapper. Bleak, desperate yet hilarious in its disparaging and honest recital. *Sarah Bentley, XLR8R writer*



**DangerDoom** *The Mouse and the Mask (Epitaph/Adult Swim)* Collaboration records are a real crapshoot. However, MF Doom and Dangermouse are an exception to the rule, proving that cartoons and hip-hop go together like STDs and canker sores. *Matthew Newton, Poison Control*

## WORST ALBUM



**50 Cent** *The Massacre* My man fucked up and got all bougie, limp and creepy. This is the soundtrack to a straight-up bored motherfucker making up shit while checking his stocks with 60 empty rooms around him in his backwoods mansion in Connecticut. Plus he doesn't even smoke weed. The sounds of limp dicks flapping. *Vulture V, Food For Animals*

Dude successfully exploited hip-hop to death. I hate you, 50, and your sidekick The Game, who is steady duplicating your wack ass style. *Roxy Summers, Oxy Cottontail*

**Brazilian Girls** *Brazilian Girls vs. A.R.E Weapons Free in the Streets* What's worse, lounge music about pussy, or pussy art punk from the VIP lounge? *Jennifer Maerz, music editor of The Stranger*



**AFX** *Analord* Aphex Twin is one of my favorite musicians ever so i was extremely disappointed in the *Analord* series. I'm still anxiously awaiting what's coming next though, Richard! *Knifehandchop, Tigertbeat6*

**Esthero** *Wikked Lil Grrls* If “We R In Need of a Musical ReVoLuTioN,” as you say, you realize that you're the first in line for the guillotine? *Philip Sherburne, XLR8R staff writer*

**Pendulum** *Hold Your Colour* The ‘future of drum & bass’? Give me a fucking break. Arena rock isn't cool, and neither is its d&b equivalent. *Brett Cleaver, Offshore Recordings*

## BEST RECORD LABEL



**Stones Throw** While boutique labels come and go, the crew at Stones Throw is steadfast and rarely disappoints. With records like Madvillain and the new Quasimoto to its credit in '05, it'll be interesting to see what this bellwether outfit produces in the year ahead. *Matthew Newton, Poison Control*

Quasimoto, MED, Oh No, Madlib, *The Third Unheard* reissues, the *West Africa* comp, the old-school hip-hop reissues. I mean, what the fuck? *Geoffrey, Consumer's Research and Development*

**Touch & Go** When have they not been? Slint, Shellac, Big Black, Dirty Three, Rachel's, June of 44, !!!, TV on the Radio, Blonde Redhead. *Ken Dyber, Aesthetics*



**Sublime** *Frequencies* The Sun City Girls' label further redefined “world music” with their compilations of lost music scenes. They reminded one that that the world is smaller than we know it, where traditional folk music can easily shake hands with Westernized, feel-good pop, funk and rock even in places of sadness like Iraq, North Korea and Cambodia. Plus, Burmese garage rock is dope. *Cameron Macdonald, XLR8R staff writer*



**Rhymesayers Entertainment** RSE put most of their indie competition to shame this year as they delivered one top-notch album after another. From Blueprint to Atmosphere, every act on the RSE roster stepped up their game and dropped

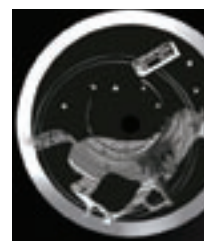
their best work yet. *Max Herman, XLR8R writer*

**Bpitch Control** From Tomas Andersson's ubiquitous “Washing Up” to Sascha Funke's masterful, minimal “About A Boy” to Ellen Allien's assured and persuasive new album, the Berlin label is setting the pace for virtually every form of techno that matters today. *Philip Sherburne, XLR8R staff writer*



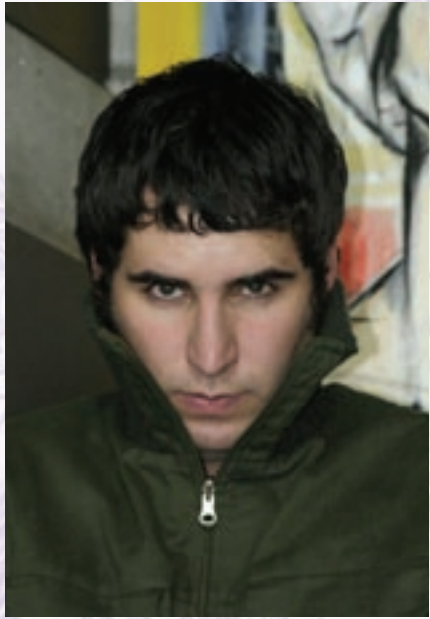
**Areal** This fine Cologne-based label is bringing back the freshness in techno. With Ada they have the queen of pop-techno and with Metope the right guy for the late-night rock session. *Thomas Venker, Onitor*

**VP Records** They do an excellent job of taking a genre as vast and sprawling as dancehall—with its myriad tiny labels and countless new tunes—putting out excellent albums, 7-inches and riddim compilations. And even though I love my grimey Jamaican-pressed records, it's nice to have certain songs on vinyl that hasn't been melted down and recycled nine times. *Ross Hogg, XLR8R staff writer*



**Orac** Have you heard their catalog? No question. Dance all night, pony. [Points you in direction of Caro's full-length] *Brian Foote, Nudge/Audraglint Label*





**TOP 5 FESTIVALS OF 2005**  
**BY MATHEW JONSON, Wagon Repair**

**1. Soundwave (Canada)**  
This party is like nothing else—West Coast weather and lots of crazy people to go with it. There are too many stories to get into... none of which I can repeat here.

**2. Monegros (Spain)**  
I don't think I have ever seen a line-up like this, everyone from the Detroit crew to Ibiza. This place is nuts. I got thrown out for being too drunk with the other members of Cobblestone Jazz and put in a van back to Barcelona with Photek and Marco Carolla. After getting a six-pack of beer poured down my pants in the back seat, I felt pretty sorry for the driver.

**3. DEME/Fuse:In (USA)**  
Detroit electro just doesn't sound the same anywhere else. I like when techno is played at 145bpm. I don't know why I can't seem to make my records sound good at that speed. Oh yeah, I forgot...I live in Canada.

**4. Labyrinth (Japan)**  
I don't even know how to describe this. I felt like I was in another world. Art, music, people and culture here are amazing, not to mention that it is one of the most beautiful places on earth. Why don't we have busses transporting people to and from the hot springs at all festivals?

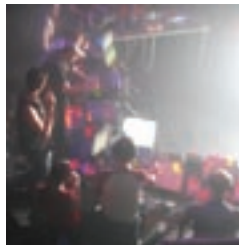
**5. Mutek (Canada)**  
It's nice to see DJs and producers from all over the world getting together on Canadian soil. These guys are throwing parties all over the world and bringing talent to Canada that wouldn't normally get to come here. Respect!

**BEST LIVE EVENT/  
FESTIVAL**



**Intonation, Chicago** No way, no way, no way did I get to witness a spectrum of performances as diverse as Dungen, Diplo, AC Newman, Prefuse 73, Tortoise, plus Will Oldham versus Jean Grae DJing, all over the course of one steamy summer weekend. *Way. Maya Hayuk, artist*

Except for some sound issues, Intonation was exactly what a summer festival should be: diverse, cheap and full of amazing performances. *Patrick Sisson, XLR8R writer*



**Mutek in Montreal** Every year this is the best curated festival of new artists and acts from the Americas, Europe and Asia. And each year you can bet that your favorite performances from Mutek will be the biggest headliners at Sonar, DEME, etc., three years down the road. *Matt Laszuk, Fresh Blend*

**Decibel Festival, Seattle** The second year of Seattle's DB Festival brought amazing producers and composers to the sleepy city, whose residents left their dark little bars to come dance. Music technology panels were offered for those who could get out of bed after all the train-spotting, chin-scratching and body-rocking. *Rachel Shimp, XLR8R writer*



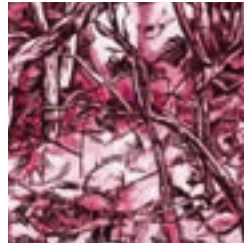
**Arthur Fest** This was the best festival to hit LA ever. Yoko Ono, Sonic Youth, Devendra Banhart, Cat Power, plus a bunch of crazy bands that only *Wire* magazinenerdswunderstand. The crowd looked like the damn Manson family and I loved it. *DJ Nobody, Plug Research/Ubiquity*

**Coachella** What could be better than road-trip from San Francisco, bunking up in a sweet, golf course resort house with 15 close friends, rocking out late night with a bottle of Jack Daniels to *The Faint* and then terrorizing the VIP area? *Lyndsay Siegel, MTV2*



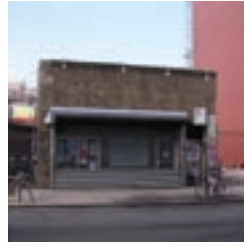
**All Tomorrow's Parties** In addition to the amazing range of artists programmed for the event (from Gang Gang Dance and the Magik Markers to Suicide and James Chance), the spectacle of Yoko Ono hanging out in a Pontin's Holiday Camp on the South Coast of England was beyond surreal! *Stuart Souter, DC Recordings*

**BEST CLUB/VENUE**



**Panorama Bar, Berlin** You can't bring a camera in there because it's sort of an anything-goes place. You'll find people in the corners with eyes rolling to the backs of their heads, people in other corners masturbating or having sex and meanwhile the dancefloor is packed with people. *Sean O'Neal, Foundound/Unfoundsound*

Any club that is just getting rolling properly at 8 a.m. on a Sunday is cool with me. One that has a huge gay rave going on downstairs, complete with an anonymous buttsex cave, is even better. One where the walls are decorated with Wolfgang Tillman's photos of shaven beavers and everyone is on E is better still. We left at 2 p.m. Sunday after a full 14 hours of clubbing and people were looking at us like we were sissies. *James Fucking Friedman, DJ*

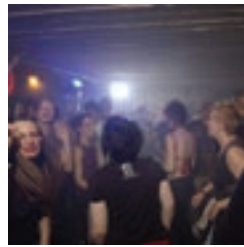


**Tonic, New York City** Tonic in New York still reigns my domain and I am glad it stayed afloat even after the sewage system exploded this past spring. Their numerous fundraisers to save it showed that many artists and audiences feel the same way I do. There is something very comfortable about the atmosphere, most likely because they never try to be cool. *Safety Scissors, Proptronix*

**Love, New York City** The *Fraggle Rock* meets Rain Forest Café design takes me back to my roots. Did I mention that they have a waterfall and a human-size hamster trail? *Alec DeRuggiero, APT*



**Kimmel Center, Philadelphia** By hosting *The Roots*, *Deerhoof*, *TV on the Radio* and *Bright Eyes* this year, the giant (and expensive) auditorium of the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia is finally giving a little something back to the community. *Will Stichter, Saxon Shore*



**WMF, Berlin** This spot has the best soundsystem you will ever hear. Plus, every season it moves to a new location. This year's location held Berlin's only and most massive Grime parties—DJ Cameo once a month on a quadruple sub-bubbling system makes your balls rattle (boobs if you're a girl). *Drop The Lime, Tigerbeat 6 artist*

**BEST MUSIC TREND**



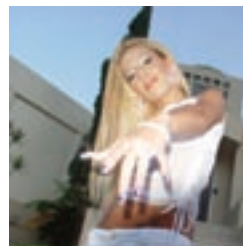
**Next-level heavy metal** Let the people mosh again! Enough of this twee indie pap. Who rocks? Mastodon, Pelican, Battles, Forensics, High On Fire. None of these bands sound alike, either. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

New metal is not to be confused with "nu" metal. I never listened to metal when I was a kid, it was strictly hip-hop, so shit like *Early Man* and *Mastodon* sounds like the freakiest, most alien, yet well played shit I've heard this year. *DJ Nobody, Plug Research/Ubiquity*



**New blood techno** Techno was at the core of electronic music and then was seemingly abandoned, only to be adopted by a large contingent of meatheads. But now there's a serious creative spark spreading through the genre. People like Matthew Dear, Mathew Jonson, Nathan Fake, Luciano, Henrik Schwarz, James Holden, Cobblestone Jazz, Konrad Black, Isolée, Scratch Massive and Trickski show and prove. *Gamall Awad, Backspin Promotions*

**MP3 blogs** Big ups to *Music for Robots*, *Moebius Rex*, *Fat Planet* and *Scissorkick* in particular—it's refreshing to see people championing music they love, for that reason and that reason alone. *Brock Phillips, Motormouthmedia*



**Reggaeton** Beats by number, but who cares when you can dance like a ho in heat with a chiseled, butter pecan *papi* parked up your bumper all in the name of 'authenticity.' *Sarah Bentley, XLR8R writer*

**All things screwed and chopped** Even MTV was showing videos in slow-mo. I pray that this spills over to all genres, everywhere. Let Michael Watts loose on the next Dungen album and we'll see what's really psych. *Christopher Richards, Ris Paul Ric (ex-Q and Not U)*

**High school kids who listen to free jazz** *Jamie Proctor, Thrill Jockey*

**Classic bands getting back together and schooling the youngins'** *Daniel Gill, Fanatic Promotion*

**Mixtapes** *Pour Les Filles: Cuisinier Street Tape Vol. 1* is it. So sick! Any dude who's gonna rhyme over Lenny Kravitz in French?!?! It's the sexiest, funniest, thuggiest, romantic shit out. *Spankrock's Viola* is a lethal mix of '05 too. *Roxy Summers, Oxycoltontail*

**WORST MUSIC TREND**



**Bougie adult contemporary hip-hop** Kanye? You need to sell those beats off, man. "Gold Digger" doesn't mean anything unless you're rich and over 35. Who actually gets a pre-nup? *Vulture V, Food For Animals*

**Hipsters who've never even dosed writing 'psychedelic' music** Don't get me wrong: I freak the folk as much as the next guy, but some of these fakers were still scoffing at hippies just a few short years ago. Now they're buying tunics...What? *Brian Foote, Nudge/Audraglint Label*

**Fake indie** All of the contrived/fake indie bands representing themselves in a way that is non-authentic to the culture of indie music. *Damon Way, DC Shoes*

**The 'new folk'** Why is *Four Tet* playing *Missy Elliot* in a laptop DJ set considered cutting-edge? *Luke McKeahan, Nordic Traxx*



**Italo-disco** Let's be honest. There are a handful of people around the world who have embraced this music over the years, know the history and have the records. You are not one of them. Sure you can go on Ebay and pay 100 dollars for some *Il Discotto* record about doing aerobics on a spacestation, but you will be severely bummed in a year when you find that record in a pile next to all of those ska records you loved in high school. Do yourself a favor and save your money—just listen to the *Cybernetic Broadcasting System* if you really dig the music. *Ron Morelli, Reagan Disko Headache*

**MUSIC PREDICTIONS FOR 2006**



**Zongamin** Japanese genius Susumu Makai will release another record. It will be just as painstakingly brilliant as 2003's prescient, yottameters-ahead-of-its-time *S/T* release. *Beggars Records* U.S. won't know what the fuck to do with it.

But will *we* all be ready for it this time? Will the mighty Zongamin finally and rightly have his day? *Brion Paul*

**The resurgence of '60s and '70s psych and metal** Although this has been going on for a little while I feel that we will see a lot more of it in 2006. *Damon Way, DC Shoes*



**SA-RA Creative Partners** The amount of hype these guys had before they even had an album out is incredible. And now that they have Kanye and Good Music behind them, we will most definitely be seeing these guys on MTV.

They might not have changed music, but they will certainly be changing the way people listen to music. *Induce, Wonder Sound*



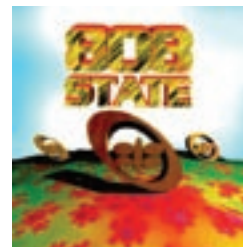
**Spankrock** Spankrock and the new evolution of bass and the party hip-hop that they represent will be big, hopefully forcing grime to refresh itself in the UK and hold its place as the most exciting new music from anywhere. *Jamie Collinson, Big Dada/Def Jux*

**Loudness** I saw a lot of really awesome loud and soft bands this past year, but I think 2006 is going to be redonkuliss off the frame as far as loudness is concerned. *Jessica Hopper, Hit It or Quit It*



**Baltimore club** Next year we'll see more Baltimore club remixes of classic D.C. go-go jams. See: *Tittsworth's* reworking of *Junkyard Band's* "Sardines," the new dancetrack for our burgeoning megalopolis. *Christopher Richards, Ris Paul Ric (ex-Q and Not U)*

**Lady Sovereign** Many U.K. MCs have had little to no luck garnering fans in the States, but with her rapid-fire flow, bumping beats and smidge of cheekiness, *Lady Sovereign* looks to be the one to lead the way for grime's infiltration of the U.S. in 2006. *Max Herman, XLR8R writer*



**Early '90s acid house/rave revival** Moby will finally earn some respect back, *808 State* will rule the world once again and we can look forward to a reunited *Quadrophonia*. *Richard Jankovich, Burnside Project*





**TOP 12'S OF 2005 BY TOMAS BARFOD, Who Made Who**

1. Kano "It's a War (Serge Santiago & Tom Neville Edit)" (white)
2. Tussle "I'm an Indian Too" (Yesca)
3. Dose "And the Last Man Standing" (Fumakilla)
4. Nôze "Albert" EP (Karat)
5. Nathan Fake "Dinamo" (Traum)



**TOP 5 THINGS I DID IN 2005 TO AVOID ACTUALLY WORKING BY CODY HUDSON, Struggle Inc.**

1. Boil water for tea, forget about it, let it cool down, remember it, repeat the boiling cycle, repeat the forgetting cycle. By now it's noon and still no tea, so leave for lunch and go get watermelon juice instead.
2. Look at pictures of my cat, Milton.
3. Go through the newspaper and internet to research all the art shows and concerts that are going on in Chicago for the week, write them all in my day planner and make plans to go out, but then go home and watch TV instead and complain about how I never go out.
4. Make little drawings and doodles about smoking weed, but never actually bother to take the time to smoke the weed.
5. Research topics through Google that have a high chance of accidentally bringing up links to websites where I might accidentally see photos of nude celebrities.

**BEST MUSIC HARDWARE**



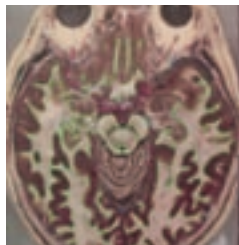
**Kaoss Pad** It's ridiculous for vocals. The only good live vocal fx processor I've found. Never feeds back compared to all the other shitty ones out there—plus it's got a sampler on it and you can splash your hand around like you're wanking it off while performing on stage. *Drop The Lime, Tigerbeat 6 artist*

I always use it for our live performances. Finally, I can send 800 people in a club directly to outer space with just one fingertip! *Walter Merziger, Booka Shade*



**Evolution UC-33E MIDI Surface** I hear the new Machine Drum is rad, too. I need to get more gear...five jobs and I still can't afford most of it! *Alland Byallo, [Kontrol] SF*

**G4 Powerbook** I don't use a computer in my solo work but I do in Battles. It's pretty mind-boggling all the things you can do with one of these things. And yes, Macs are better than PCs. *Tyondai Braxton, Battles*



**The human brain** Rugged performance compensates for poor documentation. *Brian Foote, Nudge/Audraglint*

**BEST MUSIC SOFTWARE**



**Ableton Live** Despite some initial bugs, the new version of Live continues to innovate in live performance, digital DJing and composition. Indispensable. *Philip Sherburne, XLR8R staff writer*

I've said it over and over and over again to any fool who will listen: Live 5 is the coming of the digital apocalypse. Now my two-year-old can rock dope beats. So evil and beautiful and perfect, Live was incredible—now it is out of control. Live 6 will kill us and play itself. *Brandon LaSan (Yoko Solo), Quake Trap*

**Pro Tools** For helping bands that can't play their songs the whole way through sound amazing. *Pam Nashel Leto, Girlie Action*

**Analog tape** *Derek Meier, Solid PR*



**Rane's Serato Scratch Live** Serato has completely revolutionized the way I DJ. Besides giving me quick access to a world of music previously unavailable on vinyl, all my 45s are now 12's and any remix that I can create at home is immediately playable at the club. Not only that, it's the single most solid piece of software I have ever used, and I write code as my day job. *DJ Pj, Galactic Fractures*

I always use it for our live performances. Finally, I can send 800 people in a club directly to outer space with just one fingertip! *Walter Merziger, Booka Shade*

**BEST ELECTRONIC GADGET**



**A Blackberry** As pathetic as this sounds... it's my electric leash. *Devin Bennett, Rockstar Games*

**My Yamaha QY-70** I use it in the studio and on stage, and (because it's portable) also on the subway. It helps distract me from the filthy man who swats at imaginary bugs, while ignoring those that most assuredly live in his trousers. *Paul Searing, Burnside Project*



**ARCHOS Gmini 220** Neil Aline turned me onto this little debbie and I can't thank him enough. It's basically a 20 gig iPod, a little smaller and lighter, but it also records via a line-in and saves files as either WAV or MP3. You just set it

and forget it! *Alec DeRuggiero, APT*

**iPod** Regardless of what the Luddite whiners say, portable music libraries have forever changed the face of music consumption and production. Plus, it's still the best way to tune out the assholes you can't stand...and make friends with the ones you can. *Scott Thill, XLR8R staff writer*

**Pocket Kodak video camera** Full-res video in my back pocket. It is totally addicting. *Sue Cie, Gold Chains & Sue Cie*

**Oregon Scientific Underwater MP3 player** Spliffs and snorkeling with rays and turtles in the tropics listening to dub on my Oregon Scientific underwater MP3 player was fucking unbelievable. Sly & Robbie's Unda Wata riddim as it was meant to be heard. *Jesse Terry, Ableton*



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**TOP 5 ARTISTS OF 2005**  
BY ANDY MUELLER, *The Quiet Life*

**1. Dan Estabrook**

He's a great photographer and can do it all without a computer; he's like a scientist, an alchemist. He uses techniques lost to most people: salted paper prints, tin types, albumen prints. He just keeps getting better and better and has done some amazing new work in 2005. [www.pathetica.com](http://www.pathetica.com)

**2. Florencio Zavala**

Flo continues to blow me away with his originality and illustration talent. His show at SixSpace in L.A. this year was thoroughly impressive and he's also started to add video and sculpture to his arsenal.

[www.brownlikeme.com](http://www.brownlikeme.com)

**3. Jay Ryan**

He's the best rock poster artist in the world and just came out with his first book called *100 Posters/134 Squirrels* (Punk Planet).

[www.thebirdmachine.com](http://www.thebirdmachine.com)

**4. Lew Baldwin**

He does a little bit of everything and does it all really well. He writes music, does new media art at museums and galleries, does amazing web design, directs commercials and art pieces and can also illustrate and silkscreen. [www.team-agency.com](http://www.team-agency.com)

**5. Dean Kessman**

I really like a new body of work he just finished called "Cover to Cover." It's a fresh look at how a carefully created document like a magazine can be re-examined and randomly transformed when viewed differently. I can't wait to see what he comes up with in '06. [www.deankessmann.com](http://www.deankessmann.com)

**BEST DESIGNER/  
VISUAL ARTIST**



**Fergadelic** If you don't know, go find his edition of *GasBook*. You. Will. Understand. *James Fucking Friedman, DJ*

Fergadelic is the dude behind those 'Tonite shirts you see everywhere. His illustrations are deeply rooted in counterculture ideas and motives, as well as clever references to cool bands (he's a super heavy music head). He's got an amazing frame of reference and a style that is totally distinctive. *Stuart Souter, DC Recordings*

**Hisham Akira Bharoocha** Love his music, love his visual art, love his designs. This dude oozes his art too and you know he's the real thing. *Tyondai Braxton, Battles*

**Deanne Cheuk** This Renaissance woman brings a whole new meaning to the word 'psychedelic,' not only in her totally stunning fine art, but as a graphic designer, *Tokion* magazine's art director and publisher of *Neomu*, the world's tiniest zine. *Maya Hayuk, artist*



**Surface to Air** The most on-point collective I have ever worked with. Their shit is top-notch and they deliver it on time, with a touch of class and no ego. *Christopher Glancy, 1977*

**Designer's Republic** Their 10th anniversary makes me nostalgic for what people in '96 believed that 21st century art would look like. Plus, they made raver graphics look intelligent. *Cameron Macdonald, XLR8R staff writer*

**Marok** From the *Adidas Superstar 35* book to his Bearbrick toy and every damn issue of *Lodown*, dude has it on lock. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

**Geoff McFetridge** For getting those cute little Pepsi-beings on billboards and in magazines everywhere. Literally, everywhere. *Will Stichter, Saxon Shore*



**KAWS** He has claimed the two cross eyes as his own, and has made its simplicity famous the world over. The most clever and tightest visual artist working in the world today, in my opinion. *Jeremyville, www.jeremyville.com*

**Tim Biskup** His work has convinced me to spend close to a thousand dollars on all of the different colorways of one of his designer toys. He makes me proud to be a card-carrying nerd. *Dustin Amery Hostetter, Upso/Faesthetic*

**BEST CLOTHING  
LABEL**



**American Apparel** Besides the anti-sweatshop labor, their cuts and colors are the *best* for screenprinting. Finally someone came along with a tight fit, unlike Big Daddy Hanes and beef jerky Fruit of the Looms. *Drop The Lime, Tigerbeat 6 artist*

Constantly on the rise, a trainwreck waiting to happen. I'm saying it now: There *will* be a movie about this guy's life and it *will* involve superstardom, drugs, sex, lawsuits, hitting rock bottom and redemption. And we are going to be alive to witness it and see the movie. Awesome! Oh, and they make nice clothes, too. *Induce, Wonder Sound*



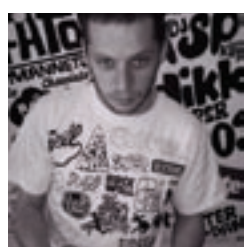
**Nom De Guerre** Classy without being stupid and pretentious. Perfect for people like me who are stupid and pretentious without being classy. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

**Brendan Donnelly** He corrals nature's creatures (owls, parrots, sabertooth skulls) in from the wild, adorns them with wings and horns and sets them free across hoodies and t-shirts. *Jennifer Maerz, music editor of The Stranger*



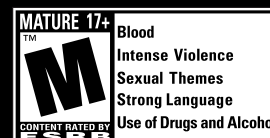
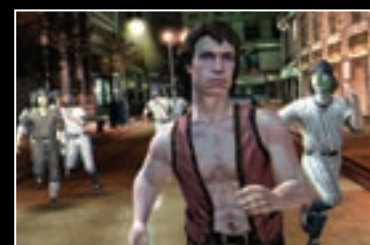
**FreeGums** He pretty much created the dual printing style, where the shirts have printing on both the outside and the inside—now you can rock the same shirt two days in a row and no one will notice. *Induce, Wonder Sound*

**The Quiet Life** The epitome of understated LA cool from ping-pong player/skateboarder/designer Andy Mueller. I own every t-shirt they have produced...except the girls' ones. *Jeremyville, www.jeremyville.com*



**Rockwell Clothing** Designed by Amsterdam's own visual badass Parra, Rockwell ups the ante in terms of innovative clothing and accessory design. *Matthew Newton, Poison Control*

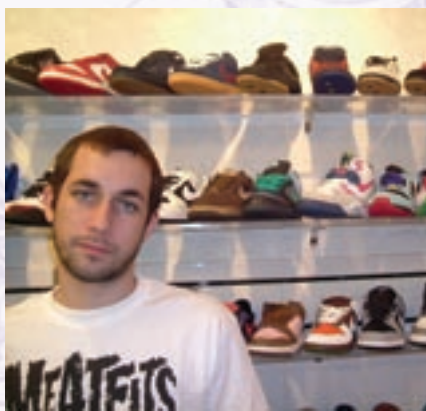
**Tsubi** I want to be these guys. They are young, nuts and successful as shit. And their jeans make girls' asses look unstoppably awesome. *James Fucking Friedman, DJ*



PlayStation 2







**TOP 5 SHOES OF 2005**  
**BY KYLE, Dave's Quality Meats, NYC**  
 1. Nike Diamond Dunks  
 2. Huf Gold Digger Trainer  
 3. Bacon Air Max 90  
 4. Vans Chukka Boot  
 5. Adidas 35th Anniversary Shelltoe (all styles)

## BEST STYLE TREND

**Girls' jeans on boys.** *Dominique Keegan, The Glass*  
**The club scarf!** *Daniel Rérat, Neuton*  
**Customization.** *Barney Waters, Puma*  
**Being straight-edge.** *Princess Superstar, !K7*  
**The Civil War moustache.** *Jessica Rotter, Birdie*  
**Shirts with all-over prints of your friends' faces.** *Vulture V, Food For Animals*  
**The grill resurgence.** *Jesse Tittsworth, DJ/producer*  
**The pornostache.** *Jackson, Warp*  
**Straight men in pink shirts.** *Leslie Hermelin, Mute Records*

## WORST STYLE TREND

**Low-waisted jeans.** *Nicola Kuperus, Adult.*  
**Boys wearing their collar popped.** *Jared Buckhiester, illustrator/photographer*  
**Oversized white tees.** *Domimick Volini, Gravis*  
**Boys in cowboy boots.** *Jibz Cameron, Dynasty*  
**Deconstructed everything.** *Matt Lazsuk, Fresh Blend*  
**Piercings of any kind.** *Dave Segal, XLR8R staff writer*  
**'80s retro.** *Amanda Scully, Lmac.tv*  
**Knowing smirks.** *Jessica Hopper, Hit It or Quit It*  
**Graphic designer mohawks (fauxhawks).** *Sarah Bentley, XLR8R writer*  
**Pretty much everyone on Myspace.com.** *Chuck Anderson, No Pattern*

## BEST SHOE



**Adidas' Oddities Line** Adidas, taking as its starting point a factory production mistake, shrewdly comments on the cult of the colorway with a cacophony of clashing colors that challenges the art/design masturbating-into-limited-edition-Nike-

footbed contingent with a bold conceptual redux of the transgressive possibilities of sneaker design. *Brian Paul*

It takes a certain amount of pizzazz to rock these, just enough so the stylish straight boys (me) can pull them off and have everybody on the jock. *Induce, Wonder Sound*

**Nike Waffle Racer II** A reissue of the retro classic. I own an all-chocolate pair with an orange Swoosh. Damn these things are comfortable! *Ge-ology, hip-hop producer*

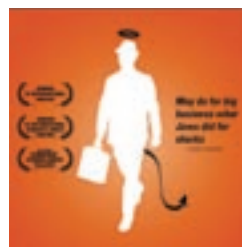
**Vans I** am a sucker for all the new Vans. The red and white checkers could often be found on my own feet but now I have a couple pairs of nice argyle ones. It's a cheap way to have loads of non-boring shoes. *Safety Scissors, Proptronix*



**Undefeated Dunks and Bape Canvas Bapestas!** *Mike & Katie, TADO*

**Nike Air Max reissues.** The Air Force One and Dunks are more celebrated, but the Air Maxes are way doper, from the original red/white/black joints (made famous by KRS-One on the *By All Means Necessary* album) to the futuristic-looking, cushiony Air Max 95s—still one of the best aesthetically designed athletic shoes ever. *Eric K. Arnold, XLR8R staff writer*

## BEST MEDIA RELEASE (BOOK, MOVIE, DVD)

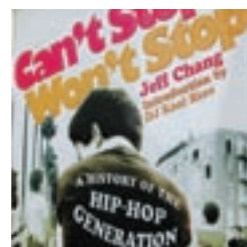


**The Corporation** The premise is a bit iffy at times—a comparison of the “mind-set” of corporations with that of clinically diagnosed psychosis—but the issues this film touches on are some of the most important of our time. You owe it to your

children and your children's children to see this film. now. *Brock Phillips, Motormouthmedia*

**RE:UP Magazine** Joshua Lynne from *Re:Up* is making things happen right now. When he's not curating shows at the *Re:Up* gallery in San Diego he's making the magazine, and each issue is a visual delight. *Leslie Hermelin, Mute*

**Harold And Kumar Go To White Castle (Director's Cut DVD)** Roll a fatty, kick back and laugh your ass off. *Philip DeRobertis, manager of El Ten Eleven*



**Jeff Chang's Can't Stop, Won't Stop** CSWS is something like hip-hop's answer to Melville's *Moby Dick* or Joyce's *Ulysses*, in terms of impact. Though not a work of fiction, it reads like folklore, making several well-researched points about the

cyclical nature of revolution, uprising and soundsystem culture. Utterly essential, and I'm not saying that just because Jeff is my homie. *Eric K. Arnold, XLR8R staff writer*

**Grime music documentary DVDs** DIY and full of shakey-handed shots, these were genius and far more entertaining than any major label-funded offering. *Sarah Bentley, XLR8R writer*



**Me and You and Everyone We Know** The feature film debut of Portland's Miranda July, which she wrote, directed and starred in. This seamless, hilarious, genius piece of work is worth seeing just for the child actors who Ms. July

created some pretty edgy roles for. *Maya Hayuk, artist*

**Chris Cunningham's Rubber Johnny** So vile, yet so lovely. Also made me pull out some RDJ records again. *Alland Byallo, [Kontrol] SF*

## BEST VIDEOGAME



**We Love Katamari (PS2)** *We Love Katamari* makes the best use of music in a videogame. The kids will love the cutesy graphics, and the parents will love all the floating mushrooms in the sky. *Greg DL, Best Kept Secret*

No videogame has actually gotten me excited after age 13 except the first one of these, and this is more of the same amazing game with a few new aspects. *Safety Scissors, Proptronix*

**Halo 2, of course...or online Scrabble.** *Chuck Anderson, No Pattern*

**Fight Night** You can create an opponent that looks just like your friend...and then pummel them to the ground. *Chris Schlarb, VP Records*

**GTA: San Andreas** Nothing like pumping drug dealers and hoes alike full of lead for no apparent reason. *Induce, Wonder Sound*

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# Wild Things

Running free with the mercurial members of Animal Collective.

WORDS: TONY WARE

PHOTOS: JASON FRANK ROTHENBERG

A pride of lions. A parliament of owls. A school of fish. A flock of seagulls. Each of these collective nouns implies an assemblage of animals (or, in the case of flock of seagulls, an assemblage of righteously bad hair). But study the quartet Animal Collective and you will discover four contrarians that feel no need to always run as a pack, though they are prone to indulge a wild hair or 10.

Living, jamming and recording in various configurations since 1996 (and under the Animal Collective umbrella since 1999), Noah "Panda Bear" Lennox, Dave "Avey Tare" Portner, Josh "Deakin" Dibb and Brian "Geologist" Weitz have charted topography from frenzied psychedelia (2003's tumultuously recorded *Here Comes the Indian*) to fevered electro-acoustics (2001's congested, challenging *Danse Manatee*). While those albums were valleys of knotty, loose-ended sounds, Animal Collective hit a critical peak with last year's *Sung Tongs*, a more rustic than ritualistic album recorded solely by Panda Bear and Avey Tare.

With Animal Collective's new album, *Feels*, however, the entire humble, heady foursome has convened for a powwow of the now, moving beyond lyrically-laced campfire ballads into a more condensed, giddily generated album of "love songs."



Animal Collective: Panda Bear, Geologist, Avey Tare (on right), and Deakin



## BOND TRADERS

"A bunch of us have been in serious relationships these last few years, but we didn't necessarily get there easily, so we wanted to record songs about the different feelings of being in relationships," says Geologist over a French dip sandwich one evening near southeast Washington, D.C. where, when not donning his indie rock guise, he has worked in environmental policy.

Wearing baggy clothes, sporting a beard and carrying a shoulder pouch, Geologist looks like the kind of person who would be happy to roam the world engaging in musical anthropology. Scope the rest of Animal Collective and you'll see similarly lived-in attire and relaxed attitudes—a far cry from the feral creatures or hyper-saturated shamans their early albums and videos made them out to be.

By Geologist's account, the members of Animal Collective are equal parts pragmatists and pleasers exploring Kodachrome dichotomies: they enjoy a good fart joke as well as fielding philosophical questions, they balance musical frivolity with professional careers and they temper their communal, at times hippie-like ethos with allowing each other plenty of space to breathe and grow. While members no longer cohabitate together—they've followed musical whimsy to spheric locales including backwoods Maryland, Brooklyn, an Arizona biodome and Portugal—you can hardly tell it from their collective "banshee beat."

"All Animal Collective albums have been about where different relationships are at, whatever immediate frustrations or elation whoever is recording feels," continues Geologist. "It's been this way since we were 14 or 15—we agreed to leave Animal Collective an open-ended thing in order to allow each other the freedom to experience other people and things filtering these attitudes and aesthetics into the music."

## MAXIMUM JOY

Introduced in a Northern Baltimore County high school, the members of Animal Collective found common ground in the *musique concrète* of vintage horror movie soundtracks, Can and the Grateful Dead's improvisational segues, the oblique, shambolic imagery of Pavement and Syd Barrett and laughing until it was hard to breathe. A blue collar-tough town full of warehouses, church basements and union halls available for \$50 rent, Baltimore provided a congruent DIY scene for ambitious kids. But it was following college and a convergence to Brooklyn that Animal Collective's quirky sprawl really began to coalesce.

"People were looking for something to break out of '90s indie rock," says Geologist. "Bands like Tortoise weren't my thing. It was polite, academic, reserved. We wanted music to be more emotional and physical,

not as cerebral. Us, Black Dice, Gang Gang Dance, The Rapture—we all shared practice spaces and I think we all brought energy to what we did that people in other parts of the country responded to. We tried to make our shows as joyous and hyper as possible."

Indeed, catch an Animal Collective show and you'll wonder if you walked into a helium-filled revival tent full of fresh scrubbed teens doing a rousing rendition of "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands." This is especially evident during the semi-regular set closer "Purple Bottle" (a song recorded for *Feels* but performed live for some time). Animal Collective's instrumentation is chimeric, expanding and contracting, and hands and voices remain constant totems. Anything the band can get its hands on is fair game for its contorted chorales and darting yelps, which recall Mercury Rev and cLOUDDEAD informed by the Incredible String Band and Roky Erickson. For *Feels*, however, Animal Collective turned to producer Scott Colburn (of Sun City Girls) to help them further widen their vocabulary and move them away from being mislabeled "prophets of rural nature boy music," says Geologist.

## FOLK OFF

Sequestered in Seattle during a harmonious March, the foursome lived and worked with Colburn, participating in what could almost be described as breathing exercises for sound. Often recordings were channeled through computer back into a room and recorded with ceiling mics to tightly mesh the overall recording. *Feels* is less autumnal, devoid of bristly squalls save for the calliope huffs of "Turn Into Something," but it loses nothing by often opting for a jaunty aesthetic rather than a jumbled one. Warbling guitars, dulcimers, bucolic found sounds hand-manipulated from Mini-disc and piano played by Múm's Kristín Anna Valtýsdóttir are just some hues of Animal Collective's emulsion.

The most immediate deviation from previous Animal Collective material, however, is in the toning down of acoustic guitar. "I think we're going to get a lot of people saying we're intentionally not using acoustic guitars just to break away from the 'freak folk' thing, but it really wasn't the case," says Geologist. "We decided not to use acoustic guitars simply because *Sung Tongs*, which we finished in 2003, was an acoustic record and even before the 'freak folk' label we were already ready to come back to the table with something more electric, rock-based or whatever. Noah wanted to play drums, the others wanted to play electric guitar. We didn't try to separate ourselves from that 'movement.' It's not like we're all friends or have acoustic orgies. The only 'movement' we've ever been interested in anyway is our own."

Animal Collective's *Feels* is out now on Fat Cat. [www.paw-tracks.com](http://www.paw-tracks.com), [www.fat-cat.co.uk](http://www.fat-cat.co.uk)



"The only 'movement' we've ever been interested in anyway is our own."

—Geologist

## Magic Moments

Animal Collective recounts the best times of 2005.

### Brian "Geologist" Weitz

1. Holding my best friend's daughter for the first time.
2. My girlfriend in Seattle for my birthday, and the other AC boys for conspiring to bring her out to the studio.
3. Scuba diving with Deaken in the Florida Keys.
4. Watching *Trailer Park Boys* and drinking Black Label in Scott Colburn's basement movie theater.
5. Sitting in the Lisbon botanical gardens with my girlfriend.
6. Driving four hours to Pittsburgh to see Black Dice's performance at the Warhol Museum with Danny Perez's visuals.
7. My friend's wedding in Grass Valley, California.

### Josh "Deakin" Dibb

1. The birth of my best and oldest friend's first child in June.
2. Seeing Amps for Christ two nights in a row on their first East Coast tour.
3. Cracking brews with Scott Colburn (righteous bro). When the day is a bit dark and you need relief all you need is the crack of a can and Scooter's call, "Hey-Ohhhh!"

### Dave "Avey Tare" Portner

1. Being on tour with Noah when he found out he was gonna have a baby.
2. Camping for four nights in April in Big Sur with my girlfriend.
3. Recording the new Terrestrial Tones record at home in Paris with Eric Copeland this summer.
4. Making deranged home videos with [producer] Scott Colburn in his basement in May.
5. My sister bringing a cake on stage for my birthday on tour in Baltimore in April.





# Getting Ghost

The Wu-Tang's hardcore warrior, **Ghostface**, is rawer and more soulful than ever on his new album.

WORDS: JESSE SERWER

ILLUSTRATION: JAY GUILLERMO

It's been about a decade since the Wu-Tang's most shadowy warrior revealed his face, turning Raekwon's *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx* into a surreal, coke deal-fueled coming out party before staking his claim as the Clan's rawest talent on his solo debut, *Ironman*. A half-decade later—with hip-hop in a slump and an inventive major label rap record seeming as plausible as Ralph Nader for president—Ghost made the new millennium's first ghetto classic: *Supreme Clientele*.

Sure, 2002's *Bulletproof Wallets* was somewhat of a misstep and last year's *Pretty Toney*, while one of the year's best albums in any genre, has been cited as more of a commercial disappointment than a classic. But as other rappers of his age group and epoch have settled into retirement or followed trends set by the younger generation, no one rips through 16 bars these days with more hunger than the Wallabee-wearing chairman of Starks Enterprises. Perennially toing the line between savant-like enlightenment and seeming absurdity, often shifting on a dime from poignant and poetic to hateful and overly simplistic, his patented torrent of observations and emotions continues to set the standard for freeform lyrical dexterity.

"I'm just being Ghost," a low-key Killah says inside the basement at Manhattan's S.O.B.'s, where he's about to perform with Theodore Unit, a crew from his hometown of Stapleton in Staten Island with whom he made last year's *718*. (An album with Theodore Unit crewmember Trife da God,



“People who don’t got no soul don’t understand.”

## Ghostface Suite

A guide to the Ironman’s 2005 guest appearances

While the period between *Pretty Toney* and *Fish Scale* is shaping up to be the shortest span between Ghostface LPs, Mr. Starks has made his presence felt all year with an amalgam of far-reaching guest appearances. “Sometimes songs be coming out and I don’t even know about it,” Ghost states on his willingness to contribute to others’ projects on a whim. Here’s a rundown of this year’s highlights.

### “Hideyface”

**Prefuse 73 featuring Ghostface and El-P**

The most unexpected place Ghostface showed up this year was alongside El-P on ATL glitchmaker Scott Herren’s latest Prefuse 73 LP, *Surrounded by Silence*. The track has that claustrophobic Ghostface feel but his two brief verses are curiously straightforward (“Police try to get money and sell my pictures/To the Star-Ledger/Inquiring minds want to know/How Pretty Tone get robes as soft as snow”).

### “The Mask”

**Danger Doom featuring Ghostface**

To hide or not to hide is the theme of this precursor to Ghostface and MF Doom’s planned collaborative LP, found on the Doom/Danger Mouse collabo *The Mouse and the Mask*. A scratchy, RZA-like beat provides the basis for one of the more exhilarating cuts on the underwhelming, *Adult Swim*-flavored concept album.

### “New York”

**AZ featuring Ghostface and Raekwon**

The loop is from *Wild Style* but “gutter” and “’88” are two adjectives to describe this choice cut from AZ’s *Do or Die*. Again, Ghost keeps things pretty straightforward lyrically; DJ Premier provides cuts on the track, which is produced by NYC beatmaker Emile.

### “Future Thugs”

**Redman featuring Ghostface and Ludacris**

It would be hard to find more personality than this trio, who can be found on Redman’s Def Jam “comeback,” *Red Gone Wild*. Nonetheless, this bouncy club track lacks a certain *je ne sais quoi*. Can’t front on lines like: “My eagle be attracting people—look, it’s pure gold,” though.

### 718: From Stapleton to Somalia

**Ghostface and Trife Da God**

After grooming his Shaolin protégé Trife on *Bulletproof Wallets*, *Pretty Toney* and the Theodore Unit’s 718 album, Ghost lends his name to this Koch/Fastlife LP, despite appearing on only six of 18 tracks. While far from earth shattering, *Stapleton to Somalia* is nonetheless a promising debut for the young MC. Of the six Ghost-laced cuts, the highlight is “Fire,” produced by newcomer Jim Bond.

called 718: *From Stapleton to Somalia*, was released in October). A black baseball hat low on his head and a golden basketball sneaker dangling from his neck, Ghost—who stands about 6’ 4” with broad, fullback-like shoulders—is one of a few larger-than-life rappers who actually appear bigger in person than they do on TV or in magazines. “Not a lot of artists these days (are) comfortable with doing themselves so they go out and do what they think they supposed to do, but they ain’t doing nothing, really. I’m fittin’ to take things back to the promise land with this next record, though.”

That would be *Fish Scale*, his fifth LP and second since signing with Def Jam. Titled after an expensive strain of impossibly hardened cocaine—the insides of which, when cut open, resemble the scales of a fish—*Fish Scale* is, as Ghost says, “the rawest, hardest shit that be out on the streets.”

“I don’t like to sit on the same shit—I like to move around a lot,” says the man born Dennis Coles. “That’s why I let them niggas keep that block shit. I could have stayed talking on slinging crack like all these other cats but I’ve been done that since heaven and hell, nahmean? I’m taking care of babies in Africa. I got families that I look after there. But I had to take it back to that other shit here ‘cause niggas respect violence.”

Things look promising. Not only does Ghost, perennially hindered by failed sample clearance and improper promotion, have an invaluable front office ally in new Def Jam president Jay-Z, but he’s brought MF Doom and Pete Rock (who crafted lead single “Be Easy”) on to produce much of the album and capture the classic soul samples that are his calling card.

“That’s where I get my shit from, that old soul music,” says Ghost, whose live show often finds him just singing along to records from artists like Curtis Mayfield. In a similar vein, the self-produced *Pretty Toney* highlight “Holla” found him rhyming over The Delfonics’ “La La (Means I Love You)”—not a loop, but the entire track. It was a bold, bizarre and somewhat lazy move that proved to be a stroke of irresistible genius. “People who don’t got no soul don’t understand when I do something like that,” Ghost says. “I prefer that shit to hip-hop any day. That’s the nucleus of all this.”

Reached at his home in Atlanta by phone, MF Doom provides some insight into his recent studio activity with the Ironman. “It is bonkers when I tell you!” Doom says with an enthusiasm rarely heard from such a grizzled veteran. “He’s coming with what needs to be heard right now, information-wise, style-wise. He could rhyme to the sound of traffic or tapping on a table but I gave him some tunes like ‘Damn, what would he do on that beat?’ and he flipped it in a way that made me want to run back and get on it.”

While Metal Face doesn’t rhyme on *Fish Scale*, both he and Ghostface promise to match flows on an as yet untitled LP, for which several tracks have already been recorded. “It was bound to happen,” says Doom. “It was almost like a cousin that you’ve heard about but you didn’t meet yet, but you can tell that it’s your aunt’s son. Wu-Tang breathing new life into the game is what brought me back out. Actually, when Starks came out as Ironman that kinda made me mad. I already had the Doom concept so I was like ‘Damn, he beat me to the punch.’ It worked out, though.”

For fans of free-form lyricism and cinematic hip-hop soundscapes, the Doom-meets-Ghost pairing will undoubtedly be a match made in heaven. But even though both draw from a comics- and cartoon-obsessed childhood and a sponge-like absorption of pop culture, don’t expect a corny concept album.

“I just write to the beat,” Ghost summarizes. “Sometimes I wouldn’t have even thought about something before I went into that studio but the beat just brings something out of me. That’s why I pick my beats so carefully. It’s like picking a woman. It’s personal.”

Ghostface’s *Fish Scale* is out December 13 on Def Jam/Universal Records. Trife Da God’s 718: *From Stapleton to Somalia* (featuring Ghostface) is out now on Koch/Fastlife Records.

[www.defjam.com](http://www.defjam.com), [www.kochentertainment.com](http://www.kochentertainment.com)

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# Spit Fire

Meetings with Jay-Z. Panic attacks. Neighborhood battles. Just another week in the life of Lady Sovereign, North London's most unlikely superstar.

WORDS: MARK PYTLIK PHOTOS: RUVAN

For someone who's just clocked serious hours at a hospital, Lady Sovereign sounds downright plucky. She's speaking to me by phone from her London apartment, fresh from the emergency room after a nervous afternoon episode. "I was so scared, I thought I was gonna die, I didn't know what was going on," she reports. "I've been having these panic attacks and it's been really fucked up. I couldn't breathe, I just started panicking and my hands went all stiff; it was just weird. But I'm cool now."

The day's strange events and Sovereign's breezy reaction encapsulate her last 12 months as well as anything. Since being plucked off the periphery of London's grime circuit by Island/Universal last winter, the 19-year-old MC has found herself at the center of a series of increasingly surreal vignettes, beginning with the intense media speculation surrounding her lucrative UK deal and ending with a recent meeting in New York with Jay-Z, LA Reid and, for reasons she still doesn't quite understand, a stern-faced Usher.

With mainstream America now very much in the picture, Sovereign (real name: Louise Harman) has been forced to sustain her promotional double-time for months on end. Featuring production from Basement Jaxx, Menta and Medasyn—and originally slated for release in late summer '05—her debut full-length LP *Straight Up Cheeky* has been postponed until the New Year.

The reason? At the behest of a beguiled Jay-Z,

a host of U.S. hip-hop producers have started sending her beats. "I'm doing some tracks with Young Guru and Full Force, some American producers, just to see how that goes," she says. "If they're good, then I will put them on the album. But I'm trying to please two sides of the world at once and because I've been going down that route, I've had to push back the album and do things differently."

Despite the fact that she's being received by America's hip-hop elite in a way grime MCs like Dizzee and Wiley weren't, Sovereign doesn't feel beholden to her Stateside suitors. She maintains the decision to push back the full-length was hers alone, and promises she'll only make revisions if the right tracks come along. "I'm still really picky with beats and stuff now," she sighs. "I've had things sent to me by Americans, and I'm just like 'Naw, don't like it. It's not really me.' They're trying to send me straight-up, hardcore hip-hop beats, yeah? And, I mean, I like them but it's not what I want to do. I like the quirkier, weirder sort of thing—that's what I want."

To make up for the delay, the travel-sized rapper issued the eight-track *Vertically Challenged* EP via Chicago's Chocolate Industries in November. Dubbed "a history of Sov," the EP contains her first singles, buzz tracks and remixes. "It's just so people can know where I've come from and listen to how I've evolved naturally," she says. "It's a little 'Hello, this is where I come from.' I want you to know the beginning."

"They are gonna have to call security to get me out."





To the dismay of some detractors, Sovereign's beginning happened not on grime's pirate radio circuit, but on a UK garage messageboard where she often posted homemade MP3s of her freestyles. Although the grime tag doesn't quite fit what she's doing now ("I come *from* grime, but I don't always stick to my guns") she upbraids anyone who attempts to insinuate that she and her Northwest London background don't belong in the movement. "Grime didn't even come from East London in the first place anyway," she exclaims exasperatedly. "I remember the first grime track I heard, that was probably a track called 'Pulse X' by Youngstar, and he's from the Northwest! All these East people are saying 'Aww, East this, East that. Grime's an East ting, you get me, ra ra ra.' Dizzee Rascal, Wiley—see, people think 'cause they're successful and they're from the East that *everything's* from the East, and it's not like that really."

While Sov's allegiances harken back to those UKG/grime jumpoff tracks, her own style is a quirky, punchline-heavy rapid fire that's inspired a wave of critics to dub her a female Eminem. Although it's a comparison she despises ("Come on," she scowls, "I'm a white rapper, but don't take it there"), there's merit to it insofar as both support their cartoonish personas with truckloads of rhyming skill. Lost in the haze of Sov's persona—short, female, young and white in a scene whose face is predominately black male youth—is the fact that she can spit with a special combination of inventiveness and dexterity. Combined with her impish, playful personality, it's no wonder Jay-Z's been keeping an eye out.

"I was nervous because it was so corporate," she recalls of their recent meeting at the New York offices of Def Jam. "It wasn't like we went out for drinks or anything! I walked into his office and Usher's standing there with his arms folded, which, you know, is a bit creepy if you know what I mean. I was like 'What the fuck are you doing here?' I didn't say it out loud, but seriously, why was he there for the whole duration of the meeting? He hardly said anything! He was standing there with his arms folded. And then L.A. Reid comes in and Jay-Z comes in, and I got nervous... It was weird. I was shaking, and it surprised me cause I didn't think I would get like that."

She must have made an impression, because Jigga recently asked her to appear with him on a new song for an upcoming Green Lantern mix. For the rest of our interview, she ping-pongs between talking about that track and her scheme to ambush Tony Blair at an upcoming event. "In the UK, they're trying to ban the [hooded sweatshirt]," she explains. "Seriously, it happened in a couple of shopping malls, you can't go in there wearing a hoodie."

As part of the initiative for her upcoming, Jaxx-produced single "Hoodie," Sovereign has been compiling an online petition at savethehoodie.com. Ever since Blair invited her to Downing Street for a music event, she's been daydreaming about slapping him with the huge list of names. "I'm taking the petition down there, and I'm gonna say 'Look here bastards, you ain't gonna ban the hoodie!'" she proclaims. "I'm gonna graffiti 10 Downing Street; I'm gonna do it while I've got the chance. While I'm there, I wanna do something mad! They really have invited me down to Downing Street for some musical, topical conversation, but no way am I sitting there and just talking about that—they're gonna hear so much from me that they are gonna have to call security to get me out."

Lady Sovereign's *Vertically Challenged* EP is out now on Chocolate Industries. [www.ladysovereign.com](http://www.ladysovereign.com), [www.chocolateindustries.com](http://www.chocolateindustries.com)

## Anger Management

The "cheeky midget" ain't afraid to be cross.

The mainstream media spotlight hasn't been focused on anyone from the grime scene as intensely as it has been on Sov. Needless to say, over the last year she's become well trained in the art of self-defense. Here she expounds on some of the things that really pissed her off in 2005.

### On lazy comparisons


"Yeah, like 'Oh, it's the female Mike Skinner'—that doesn't annoy me, 'cause he's wicked and everything, but there's no comparison! Or like when people say I'm the next Ms. Dynamite, which is bollocks. Me and her are doing completely different things. When people compare me to people, it's 'cause they can't think of anything else to say."

### On criticisms of her sometimes patois flow

"I don't though, that's the thing. Maybe I did once upon a time; that's experimenting, you know what I mean? I could do it now if I wanted to but I've found my voice and I've found my flow. [Race and gender] shouldn't be an issue to anyone. It's just ridiculous. It just doesn't matter."

### On the lead star of her diss track "Sad Ass Strippa"

"Aww, Jentina man, she's gone downhill. Someone told me this today: she's got a petition on her website begging people to convince her record label to release her album; at the moment, the only way you can get her album from is by downloading it from an Italian website! I fucked her up big time. I didn't even mean for it to get that harsh! She's a dickhead anyway, man. I don't know why they've got her on the label—why don't they drop her?"



"I'm trying to please two sides of the world at once."



# Young & Restless

British marvel Tom Vek brings depth to the rock dancefloor.  
WORDS: CAMERON COOK ILLUSTRATION: TROPHY

I'm sitting on a grassy slope in Central Park with Tom Vek, the newly-crowned British wunderkind of DIY electro-rock, chatting matter-of-factly about the role of visual art in music marketing. Lounging cross-legged in the shade of a nearby tree, it's hard to imagine that this soft-spoken, thin, bespectacled 24-year-old is the mastermind behind *We Have Sound*, his at-times ferocious and stompin' debut album.

Like many musicians, Vek designs all of his album artwork and merchandise and we've engaged ourselves in a debate about the importance of the musician's creative input in the album design process. Surprisingly, Vek is on the fence about the whole deal. "Contrary to what it looks like, I don't think a good cover will make an album any better," he explains. "My favorite album covers are the covers to my favorite records." He pauses. "I really care about it, but it's not a requirement for music-makers to care about the visual."

I argue that I've been known to buy three-dollar thrift store records for the artwork, without thinking twice about the music. "I think I've come around to this conclusion from studying design," he counters. "I love design, but it's just about aesthetics, not substance. It's just your opinion of the message. Design started out being functional and then people started going against that in order to stand out. Now it's all a big mess....which is good, but it's like music: no one can say that music is bad. All music is music and all art is art."

Welcome to the world of Tom Vek, where a simple question posed in a park can lead to a wild tangent about the meaning of art. Our chat began with the new video for Vek's dance rock sleeper hit "I Ain't Saying My Goodbyes," which depicts him in a pair of Ray Bans, singing and spewing fake blood as an array of ghoulish images—Mexican skull figurines, pulsating hearts, owls—flash around him. The song perfectly meshes Vek's penchant for electronic elements with feel-good rock vibes—think the Talking Heads' *Remain in Light* recorded in a swimming pool. I suggest to him that it was one of only a few jams that actually got people on the dancefloor this summer. "Wicked!" he laughs. "I feel really good about that. It's a bit of

a weird song; it's kind of a contradiction. Musically, it's quite feel-good, but lyrically it's a bit weird. I thought it was quite a moody, angry song, but it actually sounds really happy." He catches himself and smiles. "I guess I'm suggesting that it has a certain amount of depth."

The night before, Vek had put on an electrifying show at New York City's Tribeca Grand Hotel, where he and his three-piece live band brought *We Have Sound* from the garage to the stage with astonishing grace. While every note of the album possesses Vek's singular personality and vision, the live performance preserves that uniqueness while adding more parts to the whole.

"I've done lots of electro things in the past, and I could have gotten away with doing an electroclash live version of that music," he declares. "But for this, it was clear that I needed a live band. It was something very doable, [but] really kind of difficult. I know how much I love making music and how important it is, and how much you've got to trust people's individuality. It was quite daunting to phone people up and be like: 'Uh, how would you feel about just doing what I tell you?' But I sent them some music and they were really into it!"

Why wouldn't they be? From the mid-tempo sway of "The Lower the Sun" to the garage-rock stomp of "If I Had Changed My Mind," all 10 songs on *We Have Sound* are aptly sequenced for both on-the-town antics and quiet emotional downswings. "I really got into the idea that I wanted a 10-track record; the 7" and EPs were alright, but I wanted an album, a whole body of work. I was so pleased with the record when the lid was on it and I couldn't make any changes; I just sat back and I was completely happy with every part of it. [And] I was excited about [U.K. indie label Tummy Touch] putting it out. When other labels came around, I was just like, 'This is my record, take it or leave it. If you don't want it, then see you next year, because this is definitely my debut record.' It felt so right."

Tom Vek's *We Have Sound* is out now on Tummy Touch (UK) and Startime International (US). [www.tomvek.tv](http://www.tomvek.tv), [www.startimerecords.com](http://www.startimerecords.com)

"This is my record, take it or leave it."







# Promised Land

Travel to Shashemene, Ethiopia's Rastafarian enclave.  
WORDS AND PHOTOS: ERIC K. ARNOLD

Repeated pre-flight listenings of Dennis Brown's "The Promised Land" didn't nearly prepare me for my recent trip to Ethiopia. But the song at least provided a rhythmic template for my eye-opening pilgrimage to the African Holy Land: "Mek a step in Asmara/Then we stopped in Addis Ababa/Made our way to Shashemene land/Riding on the King's Highway."

Traveling to Shashemene means taking a flight to Addis Ababa—four hours from Rome, 18 from Washington DC, and 24 from San Francisco. The next step is to rent a four-by-four vehicle for the 200 km stretch of highway in between Shashemene and Ethiopia's capital. It's not an easy road, being utilized equally by motorists, buses, bicyclists, khat harvesters and farmers shepherding herds of goats and cows. Passing other cars is an adventure in and of itself, and navigating past pedestrian traffic from roadside villages only adds to the challenge.

Shashemene itself is a fairly well populated (about 15,000 inhabitants) sec-

tion of southwestern Ethiopia situated on the lip of the Rift Valley, where, it's said, life began. It's an agriculturally rich region known for its arable land. It's also way out in the middle of what seems like nowhere—albeit a beautiful nowhere—in a terrain marked by copper-rich soil, lush greenery, sky-blue lakes, copious amounts of colobus monkeys and exotic birds and bubbling natural hot springs. It's not unusual to see an eagle perched upon a telephone pole along the highway and a never-ending succession of thatched straw huts provides ample evidence of a simpler life being lived.

Forty odd years ago, in one of his last official acts as Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, the 255th ruler in the Solomonic Dynasty and Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, bestowed seven land grants to five Jamaican and two American expatriates—Garveyites fulfilling their dream of going back to Africa. (Although reviled as a tyrant by the Communist-led military dictatorship who succeeded him, Selassie was curiously regarded as the second coming of Jesus Christ by the Jamaican Garveyites—who named their religion after Selassie's pre-coronation name, Ras Tafari—and as a founding father of Pan-Africanism, as later conceptualized by post-colonialist African leaders Jomo Kenyatta and Julius Nyerere.)

From those brave pioneers, a small but influential Rastafarian community has slowly developed. Today these Rastas—whose numbers

range between 80 and 300, depending on who you ask—occupy a section of storefronts (with their yards directly behind) on the main road running through Shashemene, collectively called "Jamaica."

The modest strip includes Rasta accoutrement emporiums, ital soup kitchens and the "Black Lion Museum," curated by Gladstone Robinson, the Rastafari Elder and last surviving member of the original seven Garveyites. Now in his late '70s, Robinson is still a marvel of activity, as well as a gracious host to travelers passing through. His guestbook notes visitors from numerous European and Asian countries, including a recent flurry of Japanese tourists following the recent Bob Marley 60th birthday celebration, and a small number of Americans. The "museum," which doubles as Robinson's living room, mainly consists of several large framed paintings of Haile Selassie, a stack of various newspaper clippings, legal documents and other mementos acquired during the last 40 years.

Constantly engaging—even if his stream-of-consciousness dialogue is a bit hard to follow—Robinson takes on a spliff while producing document after document: a marriage certificate; an announcement of his acceptance into the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; articles in French, Japanese, and English which have been written about him. All the while, a CNN documentary on Ethiopia's Rastas prominently featuring Robinson plays on a small TV. The original notice of the land grant,





signed by Selassie H.I.M.self, lies in a glass frame on the wall, opposite the Emperor's portrait.

Down the street, Caleb, a former South Central LA resident who relocated to Jerusalem before settling in Shashemene, tells a constant stream of hungry kids in Amharic that soup will be ready in an hour. Meanwhile, more kids have congregated in front of Jamaica's shops, some of the older ones rolling up on bicycles with whispers of "high grade."

Though baby-faced, the kids already have a wise look about them. One little Rasta youth in particular, wearing an orange soccer jersey, his locks poking out from under a tam, wears an expression as dread as any Bobo in Kingston. Other kids pose in front of murals of King Alpha and Queen Omega or iconic black lions, their easy smiles embodying liberation and freedom.

As evidenced by the numerous references to it in reggae music, including Brown's "Promised Land" and Buju Banton's "Shashamane (sic) Land," Shashemene's very existence lends crucial credibility to Rastas, not just in Jamaica, but around the world, even though most of them have never been there.

Fittingly, music plays a crucial role in the lives of Shashemene's residents; weekly soundsystem sessions and occasional concerts (the last by Rita Marley) break up the monotony of farm life. Still, this Promised Land is not without hardship—reputed clashes with native Oromos and a dependence on agricultural production are among the challenges facing its residents. Yet for Shashemene's Rasta community, it's worth it simply to live in a place that's as far from Babylon as you can get.

## IDOL TRYOUTS TWO: AVANT-POP / SMM

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## Made You Look

Hamburger Eyes creates its own photography cult.

At the age of 14, Ray Potes made *Encinitas Super Penis*, a zine of skateboarding photos and crudely drawn cartoons. Sixteen years down the line, this Cali native is still snapping away with his trusty Nikon, plus Xeroxing and collating—but lately the pay-off has been much grander. In 2001, Potes started *Hamburger Eyes*, a photography zine dedicated to documenting life on Earth through compelling photos of the human condition: often drunk, sometimes uplifted, occasionally dejected as hell. The San Francisco-based zine—whose entrails are startlingly personal in the tradition of Weegee, Diane Arbus and *Life Magazine*—now counts Deanna and Ed Templeton, Tim Barber, Tobin Yelland, Dave Schubert and Boogie among its contributors and has received accolades from as far away as Brazil and Finland. Not bad for a magazine made entirely from Potes' living room at 25th and Potrero, and named after their crew's favorite slang ("We used to say, 'You should go to talk to that girl! She's giving you hamburger eyes,'" confesses Potes). To mark the passing of 2005, we asked Potes and *Hamburger Eyes*' main staffers—brother/production manager David Potes, childhood friend/managing editor Stefan Simikich and associate editor Jason Roberts Dobrin—to show us their best photos of the year. *Vivian Host*

[www.hamburgereyes.com](http://www.hamburgereyes.com)

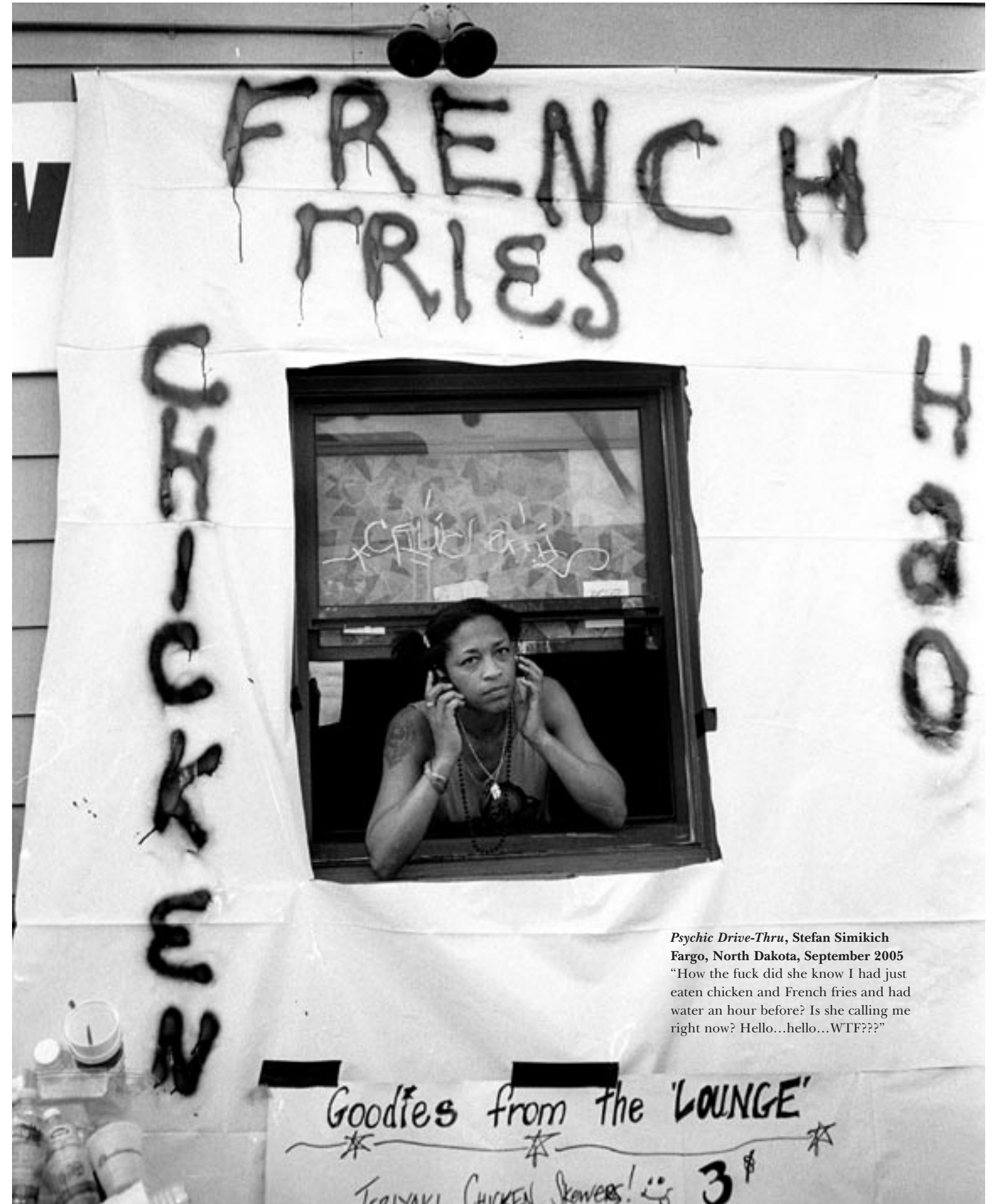


Coney Island, David Potes  
New York, July 2005

"Shoot the freak in the face. Ride the cyclone. Step in the sand. Climb the poles. Yell at your friends."



*Beastmaster With Morning Coffee,*  
Jason Roberts Dobrin  
San Francisco, January 2005  
“Wizards, witches, beastmasters, maidens,  
warriors of honor, swords raised in arms  
awaiting the final cry to welcome them into  
the halls of their fathers.”



*Psychic Drive-Thru,* Stefan Simikich  
Fargo, North Dakota, September 2005  
“How the fuck did she know I had just  
eaten chicken and French fries and had  
water an hour before? Is she calling me  
right now? Hello...hello...WTF???”





*Pool Party, Ray Potes  
San Diego, August 2005*

"Pool parties are fun because you're either in super chill mode or you're going nuts. The meat, cigarettes and beer chilled me out—can't say the same for Keith. After doing the roof a bunch of times, he went bonkers and jumped off the chimney."





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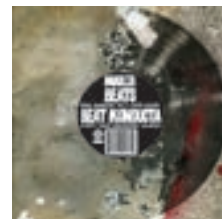
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BEAT KONDUCTA



CAN MADLIB'S EVER-CHANGING HIP-HOP AND JAZZ PERSONAS KEEP US SPELLBOUND?

Madlib is one of those cats whose work draws a wide array of responses from listeners. Some think of him as a deity, feverishly copping the obscure releases and random side projects he continues to churn out at an alarming rate. Others really don't see what all the fuss is about, and generally dismiss him as a perpetually baked, self-indulgent noodler who somehow managed to pull the wool over critics' ears. Then there's the middle ground, heads that sincerely dig some of his stuff but remain unimpressed with certain sections of his catalog.

2005 has been a big year for the bad kid. He successfully followed up the much-loved Madlib/MF Doom collabo album *Madvillainy* with the equally fucked-up-in-a-good-way *Further Adventures of Lord Quas* by his alter-ego Quasimoto; he also lent his sonic stamp to MED's debut, not to mention singles with lung-collapsing lyricist Percee P and Motor City upstarts Lawless Element. On his latest recordings, the prolific producer goes strictly instrumental, leading a straight jazz band and dropping a pseudo soundtrack full of heavily chopped beats.

Like Madlib's one-man band Yesterday's New Quintet, Sound Directions is a jazz group heavily steeped in the funky sounds of the '60s and '70s. Unlike YNQ, it's a real group with actual musicians—not Madlib under five different aliases. The session players he enlists have accompanied the likes of Breakestra, the Dap Kings and Connie Price, and their chops are apparent throughout the album's 11 tracks. Madlib holds it down on the drums, keys and kalimba, but the sharpness of his associates definitely helps make this a bit more cohesive than some of his previous forays into jazz. A few tracks will immediately

be recognized as source material for hip-hop classics ("A Divine Image," "Fourty Days"), though the majority are original compositions.

The Beat Konducta record is more on the freeform, coloring outside the lines tip, like a soundtrack to an extended bong hit session. The songs are relatively short and very meandering—haphazard sounding at times, but cool. Full of random soul/funk loops, unexpected vocal clips, heavy bass tones and dirty drums, it would be a pretty bugged-out movie that rocked this for a soundtrack. Unsurprisingly, some tunes work better than others; "The Payback (Gotta)" wins with its subtle muted trumpets and Godfather of Soul quotes, the super-brief "Tape Hiss (Dirty)" flips a great piano part, and "Pyramids (Change)" sports some exceptionally dusty kit work. Too many of the tracks come off like throwaway beats however, and it's unlikely even the most ardent fan will be bumping this straight through on a regular basis.

Basically, it comes back to the three types of listeners. If you worship at a homemade Madlib shrine, you probably have both albums already. If you think he sucks, these records definitely won't change your mind. And if you're somewhere in between, you'll probably like 'em, or at least some songs. Neither will go down as timeless classics, but they're both pretty enjoyable if you're in the right mood. *Brolin Winning*

ALBUM  
REVIEWS  
12.05

BEAT KONDUCTA  
VOLUME 1: MOVIE SCENES  
Stones Throw/US/LP

SOUND DIRECTIONS  
THE FUNKY SIDE OF LIFE  
Stones Throw/US/CD





**JIN**  
**EMCEE'S PROPAGANDA**  
Draft-Crafty Plugz/US/CD

It was a MC-inderella story and debut that most upstart spitters can only wet dream about: signed to Ruff Ryders/Virgin, working with Wyclef and Kanye—all clear validation for every Asian-American working within hip-hop's color lines. But the fairy tale turned sour: Jin's release was postponed for two years resulting in disappointing sales (by major label standards). Unsurprisingly, Jin's sophomore album—which comes only four months after he recorded an angry joint that renounced the biz entirely—is a purist's re-dedication to his MCing roots. *Propaganda's* stripped, old-school beats might be less expansive, but they're a solid platform for the same nimble, cutting humor and flip-the-script flow that first made Jin a star—and he's still a star, albeit a more weathered one (check "G.O.L.D.E.N."s ultra-sarcastic hook). As Jin observes on "Mr. Popular," commercial success is a fleeting enterprise—"Just a dream chased/like a shot of Henny"—but the MC art form stands on its own. *Janet Tzou*

**AFX**  
**HANGABLE AUTO BULB**  
Warp/UK/CD

With original vinyl copies of *Hangable Auto Bulb* and *HAB Volume 2* undoubtedly changing hands for absurd figures on eBay, the time is ripe for a CD reissue to thwart collector scum—and to mark the EPs' 10-year anniversary. These tracks by AFX (Aphex Twin, Richard D. James) epitomize that brief moment when IDM icons were madly mutating drum & bass into crazy-angled grotesqueries that knotted any limbs attempting to move to them. *HAB* is the jape that eluded throwaway kitschness and became a touchstone for unfettered mindfuckery in the studio, by any pharmaceutical means necessary. *Dave Segal*

**MATIAS AGUAYO**  
**ARE YOU REALLY LOST?**  
Kompakt/GER/CD

At its best, Euroslaze is equally suitable for dancing, drugging or decapitating, and Matias Aguayo's latest is no exception; songs like "Radiotaxi" are perfect for a decadent night on the town. Formerly one half of the tech-house duo Closer Musik, Aguayo is, well, more minimal than others, even while creating "Billie Jean" moments for could-be Argento soundtracks. Unashamed '80s synths and skeletal drums give this music Italo charisma, but it retains its stark edges. In the end you aren't lost at all, you've just found a really clever disc. *Daniel Sivek*

**AMEABA**  
**AMEABA**  
Neuton/GER/CD

Taken in pieces, Ameaba's debut disc shows great promise, delivering beautifully sparse downtempo that blends jazz and soul. Unfortunately, there are plenty of not-so-great parts, too. While opener "Stay As You Are" is heartbreaking in its understatement, "Totally Cold" gets ruined by the lyrics, which writhe with middle school angst. Occasionally things go off-kilter, as on "Ride With Me," where the scratching sounds shoehorned in and doesn't add anything; "Won't Be This" is simply boring (although "Salty Tears" has great, winding female vocals). Overly long tracks and a lack of range don't help this album, which is as shapeless as the amoeba after which it's named. *Luciana Lopez*

**ANIMAL COLLECTIVE**  
**FEELS**  
Fat Cat/UK/CD

Animal Collective act like children who fix their imaginations on one image, and then run back and forth into a trance to make it come alive. It's a sight that worries adults, but it lets those kids enjoy the damndest of sensations. On *Feels*, the NYC band of psych-folk drifters concocts more stabs of ecstasy, meditation and delirium. There is the naked-in-the-streets holler of "Grass," the faded Polaroid synth lullaby "Loch Haven" and the Beach Boys serenade that arises from the dead to play with birds and rabbits in "Bees." An odd innocence and an uncanny pop element prevail—a cohesion of which was enough to attract *Entertainment Weekly's* Cameron Macdonald

**AZ**  
**A.W.O.L.**  
Fastlife/US/CD

On his new album, Brooklyn native AZ sounds as fresh as he did in '94 on "Life's A Bitch" (from Nas' classic *Illmatic*) but, 11 years after his debut on wax, he attacks the mic with much acquired wisdom. This is especially evident when he hooks up with DJ Premier on "The Come Up," in which his poignant recollections sound so right over Premo's soulful boom-bap. While the rest of production is usually up to par, the highlight of this album is AZ's eloquent and oft-reflective street level lyricism. As he says on "City of Gods," "I could never just sell you raps—this is my life laid on wax." And he ain't lying. *Max Herman*

**BLACKALICIOUS**  
**THE CRAFT**  
Anti/US/CD

Sure, the bar was set high with *Nia* and *Blazing Arrow*, but Blackalicious—like their Quannum brethren—are good for it. Compared to those two joints, *The Craft* takes a more song-oriented approach, forgoing its forebears' concept album ambitions. And the payoff is large as usual: the team-up with George Clinton on the seductive "Louts Flower" is a blast, "World of Vibrations" finds Xcel at the peak of his production (which is already miles above that of other, more well-paid DJs) and, as usual, Gab spits lyrics like they were so many sunflower seeds. Get it. *Scott Thill*

**BLOCKHEAD**  
**DOWNTOWN SCIENCE**  
Ninja Tune/CAN/CD

He may hate the comparisons to DJ Shadow, but damn if Blockhead's "Expiration Date," the first tune from *Science*, isn't a dead ringer for *Endtroducing's* "Building Steam with a Grain of Salt." But if you aim high, most likely you'll land high, so Blockhead should take the comparisons as a compliment. His beats are tight, especially the spiffed loops of "Roll Out the Red Carpet" and "Serenade," and the space funk of "Cherry Picker" gives concept loops some much-deserved love. And it's not like Shadow's explorations haven't inspired millions. Blockhead may not be the same DJ, but on *Downtown Science* he's showing off his skill set just the same. *Scott Thill*

**BOCHUM WELT**  
**ELAN**  
Fuzzy Box/US/CD

Nearly a decade after being discovered by Aphex's Rephlex label, Gianluigi Di Costanzo is up to his old tricks under the Bochum Welt name. *Elan* is a listening album for Welt fans, showing Di Costanzo's long-lasting love of both lush and angular textures, like the powerful hum of noisy feedback over muted notes in "Joystick Coupler," punctuated with the Kraftwerk-like electro that marked his early compositions ("D.V.E."). Those who remember the Welt's sweeping melodic strokes will not be disappointed: it's this former trancemaster's atmospheric touch that carries ballads like "Blue Part 3" somewhere off into the rosy-hued sunset. *Janet Tzou*

**BUKKY LEO & BLACK EGYPT**  
**AFROBEAT VISIONS**  
**THE MOTHERS**  
**TOWNSHIP SESSIONS**  
Mr. Bongo/UK/CD

These recent releases find famed London store and label Mr. Bongo switching up from releasing Brazilian beats to exploring African sounds. Nigerian-born saxophonist Bukky Leo recruited famed Afrobeat drummer Tony Allen for *Afrobeat Visions*, but even his presence can't pick up this disc's easygoing, and sometimes saccharine, grooves. While acid jazz influences can be heard on *Afrobeat Visions*, *Township Sessions*, a reworking of a series of health-conscious South African choir recordings by top producers, is completely club-friendly. Though remixing public service announcements may seem odd—"Your Brain on Drugs" megamix, anyone?—this comp has plenty of good, if slightly Moby-esque, moments. *Patrick Sisson*

**CLOUD**  
**ADVENTURE**  
Exceptional/UK/CD

Alex Berg chose his moniker well: his debut album is full of light, shimmering sounds that still manage to carry substance. Berg, from Sweden, creates textured, laid-back jazz, soul and house that sounds versatile enough to take you from dancing around your living room to dancing 'til dawn on a beach. The vocals on "Thinking of You" are more crooned than belted, but infectious nonetheless. "Hold On," with its touch of disco funk, sounds like an invitation to joy. And the delicate layers of instrumental "Cute" add depth to the album as well. *Adventure* is ear candy with musical heft. *Luciana Lopez*

**GREG DAVIS AND SEBASTIEN ROUX**  
**PAQUET SURPRISE**  
Carpark/US/CD

Vermont-based Greg Davis is no stranger to collaborations. Within the last year he has isolated and decimated samples—some of which sound like rutting kitchen appliances—with fellow laptop tone poet Keith Fullerton Whitman. Now he partners with Parisian Sebastien Roux for a cross-the-ocean crossed wires pollination of profusely pastoral electroacoustics. Aqueous melodies—culled from over a dozen instruments' resonances plus field recordings—shimmer as if equally mica- and microprocessor-flecked, glossy and murmuring. And Beach Boys-like moments of sonorous harmonics swell with finesse (or is that Fennesz?). With hints of Dream Syndicate's minimalism and Mego-maniacal smelting, this album's mesmeric subtleties will satisfy both academic listeners and those who prefer sounds IDM-inence. *Tony Ware*

**DISSENT**  
**PRIMAL DECONSTRUCTION**  
Wide Hive/US/CD

Dissent pulls off the tricky feat of spanning genres without ever really alighting in any one. Zipping from breakbeat to chill out to lots of other things, the duo delivers a dancefloor-friendly sound that's hard to classify but easy to listen to. Standouts include "Fight or Flight," with vocalist Nathalie Sanchez showing off smooth, versatile pipes over tropical-tinged percussion, and "Unison," with its funk-laced optimism. Not everything comes off well—the chorus of "Walk on Black Water" sounds oddly like "Fly Like an Eagle"—but, for the most part, Dissent's fourth full-length proves why they've had such staying power. *Luciana Lopez*

**DR. ISRAEL**  
**PATTERNS OF WAR**  
ROIR/US/CD

Absent from the scene since 1999's *Inna City Pressure* (recently re-released by ROIR), Brooklyn-based emcee/producer Dr. Israel returns with a masterpiece. That is an understatement: his dub texturing on the low-end counters guest vocalists Lady K and Chemda brilliantly. The vocal interplay between friends and Israel, who toasts with an upbeat consciousness, balances this superb recording. Political awareness abounds—as on the Hebrew-led "Tetze" and searing guitar lines of "Interference"—but that does not dissuade a softer side. Hearing Lady K's sensuous vocals on "Cover Me" is enough to subdue and subvert any wicked naysayer. *Derek Beres*

**ELECTRONIC MUSIC COMPOSER**  
**ABANDON MUSIC**  
**PHTHALOCYANINE**  
**NO ONE SAID YOU DIDN'T**  
Planet Mu/UK/CD

Don't be misled by the dull moniker. Electronic Music Composer (Ian Read and Ken Gibson) has forged a trans-generically brilliant debut album. Imagine dancehall, dub, techno and

grime getting their DNA thoroughly mutated by some ADD-afflicted IDM savants, as beats madly ricochet like bullets in a drunken duel and keyboards fizz like Pop Rocks dropped in a vat of Red Bull. Fellow L.A. producer Pththalocyanine is also no stranger to jagged, chaotic noise. The bracingly nihilistic *No One Said You Didn't* features 11 genreless tracks powered by scattershot beats and textures that leave lifelong scars on your ears. And this is Pthhalo's "melodic" album. *Dave Segal*

**FAT LIP**  
**THE LONELIEST PUNK**  
Delicious Vinyl/US/CD

Fat Lip's back, and he sounds a little pissed-off. Of course, the sounds of anger may just be a put-on or a parody—this is ex-Pharcyde prankster Fat Lip we're talking about—but even if they aren't, you can't blame the guy for gettin' his mean mug on after all the crap he's been through. Besides, the results sound pretty good. Some of the yelled/sung choruses may put off listeners, but Lip can still spin a terrific verse and flip a taut flow. And he's not afraid to take on unruly topics like writer's block on, uh, "Writer's Block" and his own shortcomings on the years-old (but still dope) "What's Up, Fat Lip?" If you've been missing Lip—or even if you're just mildly curious about what he's been up to—this album won't disappoint. *Pete Babb*

**FEMI KUTI**  
**LIVE AT THE SHRINE**  
MK2/FRA/CD-DVD

This CD/DVD should appease die-hard Afrobeat disciples until

Femi's next studio album of all-new material is released. The two-disc package contains Raphael Frydman's 86-minute documentary on the junior Anikulapo-Kuti's triumphant 2003 concert at the Africa Shrine in Lagos, Nigeria, accompanied by an audio disc. There's a lot of crowd noise in the audio disc, which includes Femi favorites like "1997," as well as his dad's classic, "Water Na Get Enemy," but that's OK—it's all about the DVD, which demystifies the endless-groove-upon-endless-grooves of Afrobeat by placing the music in a visual context. If you love Antibalas and Albino!, but missed your chance to see Fela, or have yet to see Femi in concert, then *Live at the Shrine* has your Afrobeat experience right here. *Eric K. Arnold*

**THE HAFLER TRIO**  
**AN UTTERANCE OF THE SUPREME VENTRILOQUIST**  
Soleilmoon/US/CD

Andrew McKenzie (The Hafler Trio) can make five minutes seem like five hours that you never want to end. As heard in his recent work with Autechre, his drones are mined from the electricity drawn from the coal of a dark, bloodied Earth—brittle and intoxicating enough to stay in the lungs. *Utterance* is a 1996 piece repackaged in a scripture-like booklet. The album's two tracks, "Placing the Seed" and "Seeding the Place," both drift like a capsized ship in a glacier canyon. While the long stretches of wailing feedback can grow cumbersome, McKenzie's drones still breathe deep and entice. *Cameron Macdonald*



**SKALPEL**  
**KONFUSION**  
Ninja Tune/UK/CD

Combining nationalism with their nascent crate digging, the Polish duo of Marcin Cichy and Igor Pudlo revisits the roots of their country's jazz scene on their second full-length. Full of symphonics for dark, smoky rooms, this impeccably made disc doesn't radically alter notions of downtempo music as much as it fits in comfortably with Ninja Tune's more solid output. On tracks like "Deep Breath," tweaks to a fluttering horn line are so subtle it's hard to tell if the original performance included a trumpet mute or if it was touched up on a computer. *Konfusion* contains examples of Cichy and Pudlo at their best, creating spacious arrangements, like "Test Drive," that jack up the natural drama of each individual jazz sample. *Patrick Sisson*





**JAHCOOZI**  
**PURE BREED MONGREL**

Kitty-Yo/GER/CD  
Regga-tech, click-pop: just some of the terms going 'round, but it would make sense to call Jahcoozi's stuff grime for Björk, only not nearly as gentle. Between the frenetic glitch of "Dot Com Bust" and the soundsystem toast of "Shake The Doom," Jahcoozi might please both Aphex Twin and Roots Manuva fans. And, despite underground tendencies, they manage to find pop songs buried in digital grit, something John Peel foresaw when he helped break their "Fish" EP (included here) on Kompakt in 2003. Since then, the trio (an Anglo-Singhalese MC, an Israeli bassist and a German producer) has turned their melting pot into a steamy hot tub. *Daniel Sivek*



**JUNIOR KELLY**  
**TOUGH LIFE**

VP/US/CD  
You want to know how long I been trying to get more music from *dis youth yah?* The wait was worth it, as *Tough Life* is eloquently orchestrated with everything that makes modern reggae audibly digestible. Reminiscent of when singers like Leroy Gibbons and Tony Rebel used to tear down the place, Junior Kelly croons out lover's rock with a unique gravelly tone that is now his signature style. His big tune, "Receive," is just saturated with truth and righteous romance. Still, Kelly *nuh just deh pon a pure singie-singie business*—his DJing is also hot like flames and fire! As far as I am concerned, Sizzla and Capleton should take a rest, and let the new boss step 'cross. *Cokni O'Dire*



LISA SHAW

**LISA SHAW**  
**CHERRY**

Naked/US/CD  
Lisa Shaw's smooth vocals are well known to house heads, but if commercial American radio weren't so lame, she'd be known just as well to R&B fans on the strength of her first full-length. Showcasing her popular smooth vocals (previous releases include "Always" and Lovetronic's "You Are Love"), *Cherry* leans into both laid-back house and lush, seductive R&B. "Matter of Time" juxtaposes dreamy vocals over stuttery percussion, and the bittersweet "When I" even approaches radio-friendliness. Shaw's house background comes out in tracks such as "Born to Fly," a synth-laced dancefloor pleaser that sounds made for 3 a.m.. As it happens, Shaw originally worked on a different set of material years ago, but label pressures and timelines prompted her to start over, this time with producers Jay Denes and Eric Stamile. This might not be the album she (or her fans) expected, but it's been worth the wait nonetheless. *Luciana Lopez*

**MIKE LADD**  
**FATHER DIVINE**

ROIR/US/CD  
Who will tell if he's one of the last poets or one of the first Afro-slackers (Arthur Lee meets Beck?), but Mike Ladd's *Father Divine* may give new meaning to the phrase "cult of personality." A concept album of sorts, the record revolves around a controversial preacher of the same name, but ends up being an MC's indictment of all the false profits of Babylon, both religious and consumerist. That's not to say there's no fun on this record—you can tell the live musicians had a blast playing for Mike and his guests from the Anti-Pop Consortium. *Daniel Sivek*

**LADY SOVEREIGN**  
**VERTICALLY CHALLENGED EP**

Chocolate Industries/US/CD  
The UK's Lady Sovereign is on the verge of making a serious imprint on hip-hop. With her double time flow, cheeky raps and unmistakable voice, this leader of the grime movement proves to be virtually incomparable to any other MC. The only downside of her American debut, the extended EP called "Vertically Challenged," is the sparseness of new material. However, notable remixes by Menta and the Beastie Boys' Ad Rock give new life to previously heard tracks. If Lady Sovereign plays her cards right with her upcoming full-length debut, she may very well dethrone M.I.A. as the UK's most adored female export. *Max Herman*

**LEAF**  
**MADE INTO ITSELF**

Suspicious/US/CD  
Ambition is a wonderful force in every strata of life, and Leaf doesn't hesitate to make their broad ambitions known on *Made Into Itself*. This particular blend of instrumentally symphonic beats takes the spirit of Anticon and runs with it. Every song reinforces the existential woes of work and the absurdity of materialism in the tradition of the great Sole and Sage Francis. Although not remarkably original, Leaf's experimentation with cello, acoustic guitar and other instruments makes their motivated compositions fiercely interesting. *Fred Miketa*

**LMS**  
**LONDON 2 PARIS**

VP/US/CD  
A schizophrenic mixture of Jah-fueled roots rockers, reggae lite, contemporary dance-hall, straight hip-hop and guitar-laced fusion, the fourth album by Morgan Heritage refugees Laza, Miriam and Shy-Poo—three of the 29 children fathered by reggae "sire" Denroy Morgan—bounces from style to style without ever finding its groove. While such cocktails are almost standard issue with reggae artist albums these days, *London 2 Paris* is particularly void of consistency and suffers from an overuse of the vocoder that would have even Roger Troutman turning in his grave. A rare knockout for VP, which has been producing increasingly consistent material as of late. *Jesse Serwer*

**BRIAN MCBRIDE**  
**WHEN THE DETAIL LOST ITS FREEDOM**

CHRISTOPHER BISSONNETTE  
PERIPHERY  
Kranky/US/CD  
Toss your valerian down the sink—Kranky's got your relaxation Rx right here. McBride made intensely quiet, guitar-based ambience in Stars of the Lid; Bissonnette works with the Thinkbox art collective, *Periphery* being his first solo release. Both albums are built on isolated and manipulated tones, with Bissonnette's pianos nearly imperceptible among "Substrata"'s washes and hums, while "Travelling Light" finds him a contender for Fennesz's drone-king crown. *Detail* drips with melancholic, contorted strings and lazy vocals. Unlike his SOTL work, McBride's songs contain a beginning and end—the spaces between, a pleasant eternity. *Rachel Shimp*

**MIWON**  
**PALE GLITTER**

City Centre Offices/GER/CD  
Earlier this year Hendrik Krötz/Miwon's "Brother Mole" popped its head up from the subterranean acid funk of Andrew Weatherall's *Fabric 19* mix; while it's one of the few lovely spots there, the track is just one of *Pale Glitter*'s many highlights. The album is alternately moody and playful, its happy-go-lucky electro bounce spooned by slow-burning opener "Semafora" and the Underworld-like hypnosis of "Hush." Just as "When Angels Travel" entrances to the point of coma, the awesome crunchiness of "Spiralize" and "Vertizontale"—the latter of which buries an electro beat similar to that of Robyn's "Show Me Love" in its web—revives interest in spades. CCO's known for artists that shimmer, and this is simply their most luminous release of the year. *Rachel Shimp*

**NOUVELLE VAGUE**  
**NOUVELLE VAGUE**

Luaka Bop/US/CD  
Who knew bossanova covers of post-punk and New Wave songs sung by teenaged French pop singers would make so much sense? French pop veterans Marc Colins and Oliver Libaux' acoustic arrangements are at times a snooze, but the lyrics to classics like Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart" and even The Clash's "Guns of Brixton" attain a new level of clarity and poignancy in their new milieu, sung by vocalists younger than the songs themselves who, in some cases, had never even heard the originals before. Adding to the novel feel are some curious selections (particularly Dead Kennedys' "Too Drunk to Fuck" and Josef K's "Sorry for Laughing") but overall the feel is so smooth it almost makes for easy listening, if you know what I mean. *Jesse Serwer*

**O.C.**  
**SMOKE & MIRRORS**

Hiero Imperium/US/CD  
O.C.'s time in the rap race isn't up just yet. Aligning with those Hieroglyphics purists in Oakland for his latest, the Brooklynite delivers another finely crafted tutorial for would be lyricists. On "You Made Me" he rhetorically asks, "The rap game is, like, senile/Does he fit in this time frame?/Can he still spit flames?" Of course he can. Cocksure rhymes are effortlessly hurled at chopped rock guitar licks on "My Way" while our underground hero asserts his artistic integrity over a haunting vocal clip on "Going Nowhere." No illusion here—fiery hip-hop is always a welcome reflection. *Aqua Boogie*

**PART 2**  
**LIVE FROM THE BREADLINE**

Big Dada/UK/CD  
Known primarily as the beats guru behind progressive UK hip-hop crew New Flesh for Old, Part 2, through a bevy of remixes, has hinted at possibilities far greater. The prospect of *Live From the Breadline* was therefore quite promising. Nevertheless, the record is overstuffed with guest vocalists (Juice Aleem, Sandra Nelson, Lotek) and does little to establish Part 2 as more than a "producer" (albeit a highly skilled one deft at drawing from all manner of black music, from grime to dub to raved up garage). Perhaps foolishly, I was certain there was an *Endroducing* in this man; not when on the breadline, evidently. *Brian Paul*

**KELLEY POLAR**  
**LOVE SONGS OF THE HANGING GARDENS**

Environ/US/CD  
You know if Morgan Geist (Metro Area) is at the boards it's gotta sound clean and make you want to move. But this tight, 43-minute album heads in a new direction, guided by the vocal talents of Kelley Polar. Geist's tense synth strings, full basslines and washed-out pads are an excellent match for Polar's breathy but understated singing on "Here In The Night" and "Black Hole," but the pair seems to lose the plot somewhat on slower numbers like "Matter Into Energy," which aims for gravitas but ends up sinking under its own meandering weight. *Peter Nicholson*

**THE PRIMERIDIAN**  
**DA ALLNIGHTA**

MR. GREENWEEDZ & G. RIOT  
G-STRINGS  
All Natural/US/CD  
The road to the hip-hop bargain bin is paved with good intentions, and nowhere is this more true than in conscious rap. These two albums from the All Natural Inc. imprint, named after the respected Windy City rap crew, provide a vivid example of why saying the right thing doesn't matter if you're sloppy. Primeridian vacillates all over their new album. Waves of smooth, almost narcotic, production crash up against lyrics that sound choppy and cliché in some spots, sleepy in others. With a slightly tighter flow and more polished production (a swirling set of sax lines and relaxing beats), Mr. Greenweedz & G.Riot's *G-Strings* is more compelling, but not without its flaws, including an occasional lack of forward momentum and some bunk, bunched-up rhymes. *Patrick Sisson*

**PRIMES**  
**PRIMES**

Action Driver/US/CD  
Bleeping chaos, danceable desecration, marching into the apocalypse. Primes is the confrontational and abrasively sexual militia that may just send The Faint back to their Nebraskan garage searching for a new sound. This band's scratchy, distorted vocals, which screech against an all-too-powerful percussion force, are undeniably effective, regardless of anyone's personal taste. Forged from

the flames of post-punk band A Luna Red, Primes isn't devoid of energy. Their black hymns will definitely destroy a mass of expensive haircuts, annihilate too tight blazers and bring any dancefloor to its knees. *Fred Miketa*

**RAMSES REVOLUTION**  
**RAMSES REVOLUTION**

Flora Fauna/SWE/EP  
When your selling point is claiming to be the premiere Afrobeat band in Stockholm—a claim that probably isn't heavily contested—the gimmick tag probably isn't far off. Like Japanese consumer products labeled with awkward English phrases, Ramses Revolution could be just another cute but ultimately awkward cultural exchange, but these Swedes definitely kick out the jams. Reggae-influenced singer Samuel Lanciné Gustafsson throws down soul on the mic, and the rest of the nine-piece ensemble lays down typical, but ultimately tight, rhythms. Such a solid performance makes notions of geography irrelevant. *Patrick Sisson*

**DIJF SANDERS**  
**TO BE A BOB**

DUB/NETH/CD  
In the same way Tom Waits-spun tales familiar to Big Easy pimps and Brooklyn pachucos in the back alleys of San Diego and Minneapolis on *To Be A Bob*, Dijf Sanders makes modern Antwerp sound more like some bizarre bohemian Jersey City than a Euro club capitol. Let's call it broken beat-nik: overdriven and

overdubbed beats, processed into a conceptualized jazz mulch in which flowers Beck alumnum Jon Birdsong's smoky, muted trumpet, Benjamin Dousselaere's Mingus-inspired bass and Sanders' own oddly accented, gruff café croon. It's odd, it's inspired and it's oh-so close to true greatness. *Justin Hopper*

**SELF-SCIENTIFIC**  
**CHANGE**

Angeles Records/US/CD  
LA's Chace Infinite and DJ Khalil drop knowledge for a generation seduced by the thug life gospel. Building on *Gods and Gangstas* (2005), Self-Scientific proposes revolutionary changes that will keep youngsters out of jail and our government from starting wars against people of color. Rolling with Aftermath since 2004, Khalil shows a Dre influence as he flips samples ("Tears") and fierce anthems ("King Kong" featuring Bun B). Like Pac, Chace resonates ("When I Die" w/Planet Asia) with Gs and ghetto activists alike when he raps: "I hope God is a gangsta who embraces my torch and soul." *James Mayo*

**SPECIFICS**  
**LONELY CITY**

LP/US/CD  
This three-man crew from Montreal, Quebec (MC Golden Boy, Producer Think Twice and DJ Goser) takes hip-hop back to a time of creative samples, monotone vocals and fresh cuts. Think Twice comes with some heavy, boom-bap beats, along with jazz and soul



ALEX UNDER

**ALEX UNDER**  
**DISPOSITIVOS DE MI GRANJA**

Trapez/GER/CD  
Finally, Spain has arrived as a techno power with Alex Under's *Dispositivos De Mi Granja*. Coming on like John Tejada—if he were raised on Chain Reaction's back catalog—Under creates some of this decade's most mesmerizing and charmingly quirky minimal techno. The 10 tracks here boast elegant melodies and coast on relentless rhythms of sensual, hypnotic grace. Under's ebullient, texturally fascinating cuts will keep floors grooving without cheesing them up. He possesses the rare ability to uplift with sublimely chilled understatement. *Dispositivos* is one of the most accomplished debuts in recent memory. *Dave Segal*





samples and chopped up sounds reminiscent of early Dr. Dre, RZA and Premier productions. Credit due to DJ Goser's smooth, understated scratches, cutting in familiar vocal snippets, horns and snares from classic hip-hop tracks. Check for the cuts "Lonely City," "Put Ya Hands Up," "Under The Hood" and "That is Why" to truly understand the musical diversity of this crew. *DJ Daz*

**SPEEDY  
NUEVA GENERACION**

Sequence/US/CD  
Though he's spitting high-pitched Spanish like an auctioneer, rising reggaeton star Speedy isn't merely repping for San Juan on *Nueva Generacion*. Leading off with a remix of his international hit "Sientelo," featuring the sex-starved English lyrics of lady Lumidee, Speedy slays on 13 fist-pumping tracks with wide appeal. To compliment Speedy's voice, which is stuck in the stratosphere, the music is a hyperactive mix of deep, grimy synths, rollicking drums and mariachi guitar lines. Daddy Yankee's "Gasolina" has spread far and wide, and Speedy proves he's one of a crop of reggaeton stars that may set it ablaze. *Patrick Sisson*



**THE TIMEOUT DRAWER  
NOWONMAI**

Consumer's Research and Development/US/CD  
I have a particularly soft spot for instrumental rock fed through a shitload of effects, so The Timeout Drawer's mind-melding of Mogwai's brute guitar attack and *Animals-era* Floyd prog is a perfect match. Like their previous effort *Presents Left for the Living Dead*, Timeout's newest specializes in epic soundtracking. Almost all of the release boasts multi-movement machine fucks stretching past the five-minute mark, especially the sprawling "Burning With Tears, I Commit to Destroying You" and the



hard-charging finale "What Looked Like Morning Was the Beginning of Endless Night." They may bring the wordy titles, but there's pain pulsating beneath Timeout's engine. More than they want. *Scott Thill*

**U-GOD  
MR. XCITEMENT  
PRODIGAL SUNN  
RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SUNN**

Free Agency/US/CD  
Considering recent indifference to the likes of even Ghostface and Method Man, is there really much interest in a slate of new releases from Wu-Tang B-teamers? While U-God's rapid-fire baritone always sounded great on Wu posse cuts, he's never created much interest as an individual. No wonder—his *Mr. Xcitement* is a mess that culminates in "Jenny," some kind of demented take on '80s New Wave. Sunz of Man architect Prodigal Sunn's *Return of the Prodigal Sunn* fares somewhat better, but only slightly. Sunn's Bed-Stuy flow passed muster in the late '90s but *Return* is just more of the same, almost 10 years later. The light-hearted "Lovely Ladies" is one of a handful of standouts but the rest is mostly unmemorable, by-the-numbers hip-hop. *Jesse Server*

**VLADISLAV DELAY  
THE FOUR QUARTERS  
THE DOLLS  
THE DOLLS**

Huume/GER/CD  
Vladislav Delay makes the listener wait for things that never happen. On *Four Quarters*, he makes digital dub sound like a crowded warehouse with DSP noises and faint organ melodies clanging on accident. Yet the music seems trapped in place and rarely coheres into a beat—like a free-jazz drummer noodling for an hour. The Dolls (Delay with laptop noise chanteuse AGF and *Moulin Rouge* composer/pianist Craig Armstrong) is stronger as they stick to a trip-hop formula where AGF croons basement club piano ballads that verge on being swallowed up by the street clatter outside. Still, a soothing sound. *Cameron Macdonald*

**VORPAL  
AN INCOMPLETE GUIDE TO VORPAL MUSIC**

CockRockDisco/GER/CD  
Vorpal (Andy Kozloski) exhales breakcore rhythms that remind me of when my cat beats me to a bloody pulp. The attacks veer from lazy swipes to ninja assaults that make my arm's scars look like a Pollock. True to Jason Forrest's CockRockDisco name, our man finds great funk in epilepsy. "You Treacherous Girl" gives a 23rd century gloss to frustrated and mutinous beats. "November014" sounds like Venetian Snares sabotaged by a remote control and the oddly addictive "Irrevocable" is a delicate string ballad on the verge of implosion. Kozloski well trumps the IDM cliché of gentle music boxes playing with scattershot beats. *Cameron Macdonald*

**THE WATTS PROPHETS  
THINGS GONNA GET GREATER: THE WATTS PROPHETS 1969-71**

Water/US/CD  
Formed in the wake of the infamous 1965 Watts riots, the Watts Prophets were a sort of West Coast equivalent of New York's Last Poets, dropping pro-black street corner poetry atop minimal free jazz and tribal percussion with an urgency and resonance that would later influence the tones of such hip-hoppers as Eazy-E, DJ Quik, Brand Nubian and Ghostface. While 1971's *Rappin' Black in a Black World* and 1969's *The Black Voices: On the Street in Watts* (included on *Things Gonna Get Greater* in anachronistic order) are perhaps too exhausting to take together in one sitting, the high-pitched sermonizing of Prophet Amde Hamilton would be arresting in any milieu—and, as elucidated in liner notes by *Can't Stop Won't Stop* author Jeff Chang, many of the group's observations on race and America remain startlingly relevant today. *Jesse Server*

**WINDY & CARL  
THE DREAM HOUSE/DEDICATIONS TO FLEA**

Kranky/US/2CD  
It's odd how beautiful songs rooted in death and loss can actually be. It's been five years since Windy & Carl have released an album and it's been well worth the wait. The duo's blend of thick melodic drone over long space trails evokes a melancholic, serene radiance. Recorded in the privacy of their Michigan home, *The Dream House* disc magnifies spacious, processed guitar notes that stream into your very soul. *Dedications to Flea* is an ode to their late dog composed of actual samples of Flea himself. Lie down, turn up your stereo and rejoice in life. *Fred Miketa*



GZA AND DJ MUGGS

**DJ MUGGS VS. GZA  
GRANDMASTERS**

Angeles/US/CD  
Longing for the glory days of the Wu-Tang? Look no further than this no-brainer collaboration between Cypress Hill's DJ Muggs and the Wu's GZA (who worked together on the '97 album, *Muggs Presents The Soul Assassins*). As Muggs' production is often Wu-Tang-esque, this pairing works all the better. On songs like "Exploitation of Mistakes," Muggs' eerie, drum-heavy beat fuels the fire that is the GZA's vividly chilling narrative. And at only 12 tracks deep, these two maintain the same quality throughout. The only real problem with this album is that Muggs presents it as a mash-up release (see the "versus" in the title). There's no battling or convergence of contrasting sounds going on here—this is an affable collaboration between two of hip-hop's finest. Period. *Max Herman*

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**GILLES PETERSON**

## COMP REVIEWS

**GILLES PETERSON:  
THE BBC SESSIONS**  
Ether/UK/CD

**GILLES PETERSON: DIGS AMERICA:  
BROWNSWOOD U.S.A.**  
Ubiquity/US/CD



**ENGLAND'S VETERAN  
TASTEMAKER PROVES  
HE STILL KNOWS A  
GOOD TUNE.**

Gilles Peterson has made a career out of good taste. In art, this is common; in music, however, this idea is tougher to grasp. Yet music is Peterson's art. Since his teenage years in South London—setting up a makeshift pirate radio station by hanging a transmitter from a tree—all he wanted to do was share sound. Today he hosts *WorldWide*, the most successful show on the BBC's Radio 1. That's a far cry from using a pub payphone for requests.

Peterson's legacy is rooted in a deep knowledge of obscure sounds from around the planet, as well as his investigative promotion of better-known names. This is evident from his two-disc set, *The BBC Sessions*, a collection of 27 live performances hijacked from the BBC's vaults. Considering the quality of these songs and musicians, you're certain each artist was comfortable in his Maida Vale studio. Peterson's friendly demeanor and stealth interest demands such.

Each disc is unapologetically eclectic, so much so that the genres and tempos jump from track to track. The epoxy holding it together is the overwhelming honesty of the performers. The Roots come alive with a fast-paced rendition of the bass-heavy "Melting Pot," a revamped version of *The Tipping Point's* "Web" that proves Questlove and Black Thought's reliability as hip-hop's best live outfit. A half-album later, Common lays down a similar groove ("The Corner"), while Cody Chestnut sings a beautiful rendition of his runaway hit "The Seed" (ironically covered by The Roots on *Phrenology*).

While heavy on soul and jazz—Amp Fiddler, Bilal, Dwele and Heritage Orchestra all appear—a broader range exists. Björk sounds infallible on "Who Is It," and Zero 7 offers such passion on "This World." A haunting rendition of "Romance" by Portishead vocalist Beth Gibbons is stunning; of similar gravity, New Zealand's Fat Freddy's Drop layers gorgeous textures of reggae and funk on "This Room." Considering 27 songs is a fraction of Peterson's catalog, one can surmise what gems were left off.

Make no mistake, his library is deep; so vast, in fact, Peterson owns a separate house—Brownswood—to store his collection. This title serves perfectly for Ubiquity's latest series, *Digs America*, in which DJs and producers offer glimpses into their holdings. Showing innate flexibility—the man has also released *Gilles Peterson in Brazil* and *in Africa* over the past year—he crate digs 16 near-forgotten (or rarely heard) jazz classics from the last few decades.

The nine-minute "Ode to Africa" by Harold McKinney injects indigenous percussion into a funkified cruiser, while Ellen McIlwaine delivers a stellar rendition of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground." The opening "Didn't I" by Dorando is worthy of Bobby Womack status—a string-dominated soul cut sung intensely from the heart. This seems to sum up Peterson's three decades of work: a passionate enquiry into all the goodness music can bring. By following his heart, he's opened the ears of millions. *Derek Beres*





**CULT CARGO: BELIZE CITY BOIL UP**

Número Group/US/CD

To prove that defenses against the global funk pandemic are as weak as ever, the brilliant muso-historical revisionists at the Número Group present *Cult Cargo*, 16 infectious cuts of '60s and '70s funk, disco and reggae from (get this) Belize. These tracks are deadly to the un-inoculated—which, of course, is almost everyone. Where before have you grooved to The Harmonettes' floor-shaking version of "Shame Shame Shame"? Unless you've dug in dusty Belize City crates, you've never experienced exceptional chunks of funk like Soul Creations' epic "Funky Jive." Heavily influenced by James Brown and JA, yet flavored with a heretofore little-known Belizean spice, and accompanied by Número's signature excellent packaging and notes, *Cult Cargo* is biological funk warfare at its finest. *Justin Hopper*



**ALTER EGO: TRANSPHORMED**

Klang Elektronik/GER/CD

Injecting '90s living room electronica with some breathing room, Germany's Alter Ego now figures prominently among the Teutonic tech-house, heroin house, microhouse, et al. empires. *Transphormed* collects one disc of Alter Ego's contemporary remixes and one of Alter Ego remixed. The remixes—of Human League, Octave One, Primal Scream, 2Raumwohnung, Solvent, Riton and Tiefschwarz, among others—feature a bevy of beats transmogrified with constricting suspense, 6/8 *schaffe/s* glide and Krautrock undulation. Meanwhile, the remixes of Alter Ego's *Transformer* album—including those by Robag Wruhme, Isolée and Ricardo Villalobos—sublimate from streamlined, clenching chirps and churning assembly line electro/NRG into soulful shuffle and clipped stomp. *Tony Ware*

**ANNIE: DJ-KICKS**

!K7/GER/CD

Annie often resembles a Kylie Minogue for the Gen Y cosmo crowd. I was suspicious that she couldn't go far without her producers in her solo DJ set, but she does fine. Our woman delivers a familiar mutant disco/electroclash/indie rock/dance punk mix featuring the usual suspects: Le Tigre, ESG, Liquid Liquid, Death from Above 1979, Mu. However, the surprises come in the form of the Gucci

Crew II's oversexed Miami Bass classic "Sally, That Girl!" and Annie's own "Wedding" and "Gimmie Your Money," both of which sound like '83 Madonna singing in a club polluted with amyl nitrate. Now that's entertainment. *Cameron MacDonald*

**EWAN PEARSON SC.FI.HI.FI. VO. 1**

Soma/UK/CD

Leave it to Ewan Pearson to program a mix featuring a track that proclaims "I don't want to have sex with you" and make it drop sexy. While this number by Soldout is a heavy, fuzzed-out highlight of this Ableton-enabled mix, it's hard to find anything that doesn't live up to its deliciously high standard of raw electro house. From Riton's disco drums re-rub of Brazilian Girls to Pearson's own chugging and grinding version for Feist, the Scottish producer takes the path less played, sequencing an unpredictable and devastating set that not only features killer tracks but damn fine DJing—even if he did use a computer. *Peter Nicholson*

**GANG OF FOUR: REMIXES**

V2/UK/CD

V2's vision of having current musicians remix Gang of Four's classic tracks was only good in theory. Surely ambitious and well intentioned, the results are lackluster re-interpretations of excellent post-punk tunes. Both Ladytron and The Dandy Warhols' remixes lack the charm of their previous works—let alone Gang of Four's endearing originals. The remainder of the project features Yeah Yeah Yeahs, The Others and Hot Hot Heat halfheartedly retouching recordings that are untouchable. With the exception of The Rakes' slant on "Natural's Not In It," the UK Remix Disc is a sloppy butchering of timeless songs. Yuck. *David Ma*

**GRIZZLY BEAR: HORN OF PLENTY—THE REMIXES**

Kanine/US/CD

The Grizzly Bear remixes transform the band's conventional take on indie folk into an eclectic horizon of genre-defying electronic compositions. Complete with retouches by Ariel Pink, Circlesquare and Solex, this album sizzles, drones and pops its way into your head from beginning to end. The dopest track is Dntel's interpretation of "Merge," a patiently waving, bass-oriented dive into the depths of human emotion. Each track embodies a tonal consistency that's engaging as hell. If a remix album could win an award for connecting a batch of electronic genres to the world of indie rock, we may have a winner. *Fred Miketa*

**HARDCORE BEATS 2: MIXED BY OLLYWOOD & ED209**

Hardcore Beats/UK/CD

This 25-track compilation mixed by Hardcore Beats label owners Ollywood and Ed209 is a non-stop bombardment of brisk breakbeat tracks. While the tempo and rhythm of the featured selections doesn't vary much, what makes many of these tracks singular are their fine details. From the vintage reggae vocal snippets on "Outta Space VIP" to the rapid-fire raps by Skinnyman and company on the Stanton Warriors remix of "Fame and Money," almost every track offers its own subtleties. Then again, when you're enjoying these songs in the club, you're not likely to notice. *Max Herman*

**JOEY NEGRO—IN THE BEGINNING**

ZR/UK/CD

House music lover, know your history! If you already do, the name Joey Negro (or Dave Lee, Raven Maize and half a dozen other monikers) will ring bells as one of the most influential producers of disco house. Here, he gathers together his hit remixes and productions (many of which were pop chart toppers) from 1988-1992 into a double disc collection of unbelievably smooth and deep tracks. Many, like Umosia's blissful "Unity" or his own "Do It, Believe It," are guaranteed to induce Ecstasy flashbacks in some of us old-timers, but anyone can appreciate the glossy, if somewhat predictable production that typifies Negro's classic sound. *Peter Nicholson*

**LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO: THE CHILLOUT SESSIONS**

Rasa/US/CD

Best known for acapella work, Ladysmith Black Mambazo (maybe South Africa's best-known musical export) lets remixers add mellow instrumentation to the group's beautifully harmonized male voices. These efforts work best when the remixers go along with the LBM's natural warmth, as on "Woza Ngihambe Nawe," which, so help me, sounds like sunshine. But some tracks try too hard to fit into different molds, as with "Inkanyezi Nezazi," which sounds weirdly like Enigma's melodramatic "Sadness (Part 1)." Still, despite the uneven results, the excellent starting material insures a laid-back album worth more than a few listens. *Luciana Lopez*

**LAGOS ALL ROUTES**

**LAGOS CHOP UP**

Honest Jon's/UK/CD

The most densely populated nation in Africa, Nigeria is home to countless musical styles framed by cultural specifics: Christian Yorubas made Juju from the Highlife of neighboring Ghana, while Igbos adapted Palm Wine music; Muslim percussionists crafted the devotional Apala and Fuji forms; various funk fanatics created Afrobeat. It all came together in Lagos during the period immediately following independence, render the mid-'60s to early '80s a "golden age" for Nigerian music, as amply demonstrated by these two excellent compilations. Each gives a well-rounded introduction to the various forms, with *All Routes* staying slightly more traditional and *Chop Up* straying into funk territory; both are perfect for delving deeper if all you know of Nigeria is Fela and King Sunny Ade. *David Katz*

**MIGUEL MIGS: GET SALTED VOL. 1**

Om/US/CD

Bay Area DJ/producer Miguel Migs has amassed a sizable output of original material and remixes under various guises for numerous labels. With the advent of his own label, Salted (circa 2004), comes a mix CD of soulful, thumping house flava. Lots of 4/4 soul, generous melodies and solid vocals are interwoven into a seamless mix that's neither too abrasive nor too safe. From his deft remixes for Salted artists Chuck Love & Li'Sha to the catchiness of "Dust" by Reclouse, it's about both the ears and the rump. Pass that buttah, and get Salted y'all. *Velanche*

**OLIVER PEOPLES 4**

Quango/US/CD

**HOTEL COSTES 8**

Pschent/FRA/CD

Chill-out albums populate record stores like Chia Pets: it won't be long before you can't stand to look at them. Fortunately, these two releases are far from being mere throwaways. The quality music on *Costes*, crafted and refined with care by Stephane Pompougnac, oozes sophistication throughout, maintaining the coolness quotient. As for Quango founder Bruno Guez's *Peoples* comp, a selection of solid pickings here, bookended by Charles Webster remixes. These two are guaranteed to have a bit longer shelf life than them annoying plants. *Velanche*

**OM 10: A DECADE OF FUTURE MUSIC**

**HOUSE OF OM: GROOVE JUNKIES**

Om/US/CD

Need a review? Just check the track listings. The three-disc *Decade* retrospective, spanning the label's 10-year catalog, includes Colette, Marques Wyatt and Mark Farina. The two-disc set from Groove Junkies (Evan Landes and Parrish Wintersmith) includes Blaze, Kerri Chandler and Frankie Knuckles. Factor in the label's consistent excellence, and it'd be hard to fail. The *Decade* set includes a disc of thumping, vocally house, one of sexy downtempo and one of classics. The *Groove Junkies* discs are labeled: 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. (a slower, start-your-engines mix) and 1 a.m. to 4 a.m. (voluminous crowd pleasers for peak dancefloor hours). *Luciana Lopez*

**THE RUTS: BABYLON'S BURNING—DUB DRENCHED SOUNDSCAPES**

Collision/GER/CD

Contemporaries of The Clash and The Slits, The Ruts made reggae-inspired punk that kept the British scene vibrant during the years between the Sex Pistols and the onset of New Wave. While the group's contributions to the post-punk blueprint, including their seminal single "Babylon's Burning," are arguably overlooked, *Dub Drenched Soundscapes* assumes the track is worthy of—not two or three—but 16 different remixes and re-interpretations. Even if every track added new life to deceased vocalist Malcolm Owen's anthemic shouts it would still be an exhausting concept, but, as it is, only a handful—namely those of punk reggae architect and filmmaker Don Letts and Birmingham, UK production team Groove Corporation—accomplish this aim. *Jesse Serwer*

**SEÑOR COCONUT PRESENTS COCONUT FM—LEGENDARY LATIN CLUB TUNES**

Essay/GER/CD

I first looked upon Señor Coconut's mix of "legendary" Latin club hits with a jaundiced eye. I suspected a gimmicky deconstruction, as Señor Uwe Schmidt (a.k.a. Atom Heart) did tacky Latin covers of Kraftwerk and digitally sterilized gospel as Geez 'n' Gosh. However, this straight-up DJ mix finds him being highly respectful of what he's heard in clubs across Latin America for years. Brazilian funk rules here, and Portuguese sounds uncannily funky when rapped. Reggaeton also has a strong presence—in fact, Tego Calderon's "Cambumbo" infects like sin. Also, Schmidt scores brownie points for his hypnotic action space-out "Tea Time: Mueve La Cintura."

Despite some cumbia songs that fall flat, this Coconut offers a fine primer. *Cameron MacDonald*

**SOLID STEEL PRESENTS BONOBO**

Ninja Tune/UK/CD

Listening to Coldcut's venerable radio show is like immersing yourself in an old, homemade mixtape. Bonobo (née Simon Green) does it seemingly raw, from the quirky tunes to the well-placed vocal samples (a *Solid Steel* hallmark) to the glorious popping sound of the vinyl. Steps ahead of the average mix comp, Bonobo's talent and musical selections are astute, featuring top selections from his own catalog and that of Tru Thoughts compadres like Diesler & Flevans. If you find yourself giggling and dancing in the same breath, no one will blame you...at least I won't. *Velanche*



**FAMOUS WHEN DEAD IV**

Playhouse/GER/CD

Wanna check your pulse? Put this on and see if you don't want to head out immediately to the sleaziest disco and get your groove on. Playhouse has been operating on a different level than the rest of the labels for some time and number four in this series of compilations ups the ante even further. Leading the charge is Isolée with his sinuously acidic mix of Reclouse's "Cardiology" and his own "Schrapnell," which somehow blends country western, rock and dance into an achingly beautiful mix. The key is risk-taking—from expected adventurers like Fabrice Lig and John Tejada to lesser-known names like My My (whose stuttering, burping "Klatta" is a highlight) these producers aren't content to rest within any genre boundaries. Best of all, they keep it fun and deadly glamorous. *Peter Nicholson*





## HOUSE GUEST REVIEWS: PAUL MURPHY

Nearly every jazz and Latin house DJ has at least a release or two from Afro Art–based in Muswell Hill, North London (near Tottenham)—in their collection. Originally founded by Ashley Beedle, Afro Art singles are timeless: you never sell them, and drop them as a secret percussive weapon at the peak moment. Producer and DJ Paul Murphy now manages Afro Art, and quite a few tidy production credits as well. He’s remixed top singles by Neon Heights, Ashley Slater and Solar Apple Quartette, and is a part of Paul Murphy & Marc Woolford Project (“Jazz Room”) and Unitedeye (“Far East Of The West,” “That Beat”), whose singles on AA and other labels sit nicely alongside those from artists like Spiritual South and Azimuth. With a DJ resume that dates back to the early ‘80s, and gigs at all the important jazz hotspots (Blue Note, Jazz Room, The Wag), Murphy’s taste can always be trusted. Here are a few of his recent favorites. *Tomas Palermo* [www.afroartrecords.com](http://www.afroartrecords.com)

**JAZZ JUICE THE KICKER** Freestyle/UK/7  
Amsterdam acid jazz legend Graham B is the leading light behind “The Kicker” on the UK-based Freestyle (run by London Jazz Cafe’s Adrian Gibson). Based around a ‘60s jazz sample from trumpet man Freddie Hubbard, Graham’s rebuilt it from the foundations up with a nice acidic bassline, some neat little drum & bass-style percussion and a boogaloo twist. *Paul Murphy*

**FORT KNOX FIVE SALVADOR DIASPORA** Fort Knox/US/12  
As usual, Jon “Palinka” Horvath and Funky Sid Barcelona have made it easy for us hard-working DJs to no longer look like the sad bunch of losers we are. There’s a top class drum & bass-ish mix from the Thunderball guys here, but it’s that funky, funky D.C. sound that’s the winner. *Paul Murphy*

**DANNY J. LEWIS BALLISTICA** Defected/US/12  
Danny J. Lewis is the studio mastermind behind all those Spiritual South records and remixes of the last couple of years (“Green Gold,” “Jazz Room,” “Happy”). His first release on Defected has the archetypal Spiritual South percussion sound (natch) and he’s added a pretty *whanging* and *whoomping* old bassline in there too. *Paul Murphy*

**QUIZZ FEAT. EMILIE CHICK**  
**BAG U SHOULD (CHARLES WEBSTER REMIXES)**  
Art Brut/FRA/12

In the hands of Love From San Francisco’s Charles Webster, Quizz’s sassy leftfield/broken-house number becomes a smooth, introspective electro-disco arrangement. Webster’s Vocal mix employs a simple synth b-line and snippets of the original sexy cooing, weaving them echoing through swelling pads and swirling effects. The Deeper Dub mix has a retro Chicago feel. Soulful, necessary gear. *Tomas Palermo*

**STRATEGY**  
**WORLD HOUSE**  
Community Library/US/12

Strategy (Portland’s Paul Dickow) infuses seemingly piebald elements to create two midtempo house workouts similar in vein to Theo Parrish and KDJ. Whereas the aforementioned producers derive influence from disco and soul, Strategy takes his cues from experimental and dub genres. The track to check for is the b-side, “I Have To Do This Thing,” for its squelchy Detroit melody and bounding disco bassline. *ML Tronik*

**PADDED CELL**  
**SIGNAL FAILURE**  
DC Recordings/UK/12

Much like Emperor Machine’s off-kilter approach to disco, Padded Cell throws out the rulebook for their debut, offering two sci-fi-tinged, dark, dubby house masterpieces. “Signal Failure” is the a-side for a reason: a fervent bassline propels this monster while synth histrionics and unexpected change-ups keep even the most discerning ears perked up. *Ray Dank*

**PAL JOEY**  
**JUST THE WAY YOU ARE**  
Loop D’ Loop/US/12  
New York City darling Pal Joey continues the Loop D’ Loop legacy with a four-track EP that touches on the many sides of dance music, as well as

using the tightest hats, crunchiest claps, dopest snares and most fucked up bass. The classic vibe of “Play Time” will have the old-schoolers raisin’ the roof and the quirkiness of “Just The Way You Are” will keep those who like to jack jackin’! *TK*

**SQUARE ONE**  
**SEQUENTIAL**  
Freerange/UK/12

On Freerange’s 62nd release, Manchester-based Mark Wadsworth (Square One) offers a beautiful spectrum of electronic production. A MIDI synth master, both the hot, bubbly “Sequential,” and the dreamy, late-night Detroit-tinged “High Rise”—which sounds like I:Cube mixed by Mark Pritchard—highlight Wadsworth’s growing prestige. Also essential on Freerange: Marco De Souza’s “PBC” EP, for its great electro-Latin house vibes. *Hector Cedillo*

**THOMAS BARFOD**  
**NEON STROBE**  
Get Physical/GER/12

On Barfod’s second release for Get Physical, he bucks deep house inclinations for a four-tracker of crisp acid and Detroit-tinged house music. The entire EP is worth the price of admission, especially “Mind the Others” and “Trancer.” A welcome change in today’s landscape of \$13 one-sided singles. *ML Tronik*

**DIRTY 30**  
**RED TEMPLE BALLS**  
Truffle/CAN/12

Damn, this record’s ill! The first release from Toronto’s spanking new Truffle label brings three spaced-out Afro-disco numbers full of live instrumentation and hard ass rhythms. Flip it over and let Brennan Green’s “One Night Stand Disco Mix” use you like the sleazy disco slut you know you want to be. Fuck yes! *TK*

**BAH SAMBA FEAT. THE FATBACK BAND**

**LET THE DRUMS SPEAK**  
BKO/UK/12

Bah Samba has blessed us over the years with ‘nuff ebullient conga and Latin-percussion flavored deep house. Now put them in the studio with legendary US funk outfit Fatback, get Restless Soul’s Phil Asher on production and Alice Russel on vocals, and you get disco-house heaven. Seriously, as audacious as it sounds, this one should play now through WMC no problem. Harvey Lindo’s 100-bpm-ish soul-funk rework is a vibes-tinkling added bonus. *Derek Grey*

**ECLAT**  
**I DON’T LAA**  
Select/US/12

Funky West Coast house sounds coming from...Italy? It’s true. Eclat’s “I Don’t Laa” sounds very Cali with its swinging hi-hats, bleepy melodies and walking basslines. Check the original mix, then skip right past the uninspired Honest Cars remix to the leftfield sounds of Luke Solomon’s take. *ML Tronik*

**SUPERSYSTEM**  
**MIRACLE**  
Touch and Go/US/12

Okay, if I was 15 years old and my parents were out of town but accidentally left the keys to the liquor cabinet and I had all my friends over, this record would probably blow our minds. The second 12” single from Supersystem’s full-length *Always Never Again* comes with an electrofied re-stomp by everyone’s favorite punk-dancers, The Rapture. No matter how old you are, it’s time to party. *TK*



**JAN JELINEK**  
Kosmischer Pitch CD/LP

Jan Jelinek, proud champion of clicktronic jazz, gets his band on for *Kosmischer Pitch*. The result is a new kind of **Krautrock**, where electronics and rock and roll meet again to drone, mesmerize and get as heavy as lead. A fascinating piece, *Kosmischer Pitch* could sit on the shelf next to **Neul**, **Can** or **Faust** and nary an eye would blink.



**THE DOLLS**  
The Dolls CD

A sonic troika beyond compare: **Golden Globe**-winning composer **Craig Armstrong** (*Massive Attack*, *Moulin Rouge*), **Ars-Electonica** winner **Antye Greie** (aka **AGF**) and abstract dub-maestro **Vladislav Delay** (aka **Luomo**) join forces as **The Dolls** -- a dynamic, beautifully-stuttered sonic collage. Plumb the depths of remarkable avant-garde soul.



**THOMAS BRINKMANN**  
Lucky Hands CD/3LP

An underground legend, **Thomas Brinkmann** is best known for his ultra-rare series of singles and his **Soul Center** project on **Mute Records**. Now on **Max Ernst**, Brinkmann does a melodic, softer style with his trademark avant-garde approach. Includes a cover of **Morrissey**’s “The More You Ignore Me, the Closer I Get” featuring vocalist **TBA**.



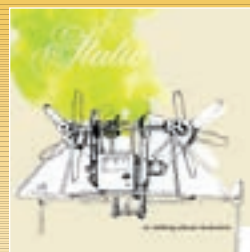
**MAXIMUM JOY**  
Unlimited (1979-1983) CD/2LP

**Maximum Joy** appeared in Bristol, UK from the ashes of the **Pop Group** and went on to collect one punk prize after the next. Their still-current punk/souljazz sound was embraced by the NME Singles Chart **99 Records**, **John Peel**, Reggae’s **Dennis Bovell** and supreme sonic spelunker **Adrian Sherwood**. Their time has come again.



**DJ MORPHEUS**  
I Can't Live Without My Radio CD

**DJ Morpheus** is a “DJ’s DJ,” that is, his quality of selection and aesthetic predicts trends before they revive. He fronted **Minimal Compact**, he did A&R for **SSR**. He’s in with **Optimo**, with **Volga Select**, and with **Maurice Fulton**. Here, he calls on **Thrill Kill Cult**, **Shriekback**, **23 Skidoo**, **Medium Medium**, **The Residents**, and 11 more. He’s the man.



**STATIC**  
Re: Talking About Memories CD/2LP

With an extended family that includes **Lali Puna**, **Jan Jelinek**, **To Rococo Rot**, **Pole** and **Tarwater** you should expect quality. **Static** does not disappoint. On his third release, Static sets layered melodies in aquatic reverb, creating a fuzz-filled wonderland for your morning and/or late night. Includes a cover of **The Assembly**’s “Never Never.”



**THE ORB**  
Okie Dokie It's The Orb on Kompakt CD/2LP

The legend returns. Now at home on **Kompakt**, **Thomas Fehlmann** and **Alex Paterson** have come full circle. The duo created Ambient House, classics like **“Little Fluffy Clouds,”** *U.F.Orb*, a 22-minute single and 12 albums. *Okie Dokie* is 14-tracks in all, including their 3 vinyl-only singles. The Orb’s back: underground.



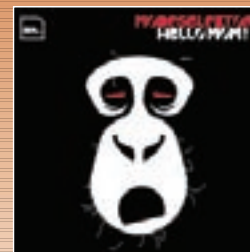
**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
The In-Kraut: Hip-Shaking Grooves Made in Germany 1966-1974 CD/2LP

A unique collection for any admirer of the **Peter Thomas Sound Orchestra**, **France Gall** or the **Get Easy!** series. Herr Thomas and Mile. Gall both appear here, along with drugsplottation funk, drunken breakbeats and hippie harmony. Compiled by the *Get Easy!* dudes, many of the 20 tracks appear on CD for the first time. Get in with the In-Kraut.



**SIR ALICE**  
? CD

After her appearance with **Nouvelle Vague**, the world may have woke up to **Sir Alice**. Now’s your chance to be confronted. Sir Alice is a new breed of artist, a combination of **Lydia Lunch**, **Cyndi Lauper** and **Flavor Flav**. One part performance, one part style, all parts Sir Alice. “Fiery and eclectic, ? is experimental, audacious” - *Nylon*



**MODESELEKTOR**  
Hello, Mom! CD/2LP

Rapidly ascending duo **Modeselektor** is buzzing for a reason. Taking in **French Hip-Hop**, **Crunk beats**, **Electro madness**, **Boody-Bass** tempos and the kitchen sink, they are a fresh kind of dance sound: careless, cantankerous and cut-up. Features **Paul St. Hilaire** and **TTC**. “Cold funky stupid.” - *Pop Matters* “Production brilliance.” - *Earplug*



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Camping 2 CD

BPitchstress **Ellen Allien** picks her favorite tracks from her label: **BPitch Control**. Included is the dancefloor megasmash “Washing Up (**Tiga** Remix)” by Swedish sound maker **Tomas Andersson**. Also: Dutch electro from **Dexter**, British breaks from **The MFA**, BPC secret weapon **Paul Kalkbrenner** and of course, Allien herself.



**COBRA KILLER & KAPAJKOS**  
Das Mandolinenorchester CD/LP

Leave it to **Cobra Killer**. The wine-throwing, mic-abusing wonderduo redefine their sound with the aid of: an orchestra of **mandolins**. Recontextualized, their electro-punk songs become something entirely new. After working in the **Digital Hardcore** realm, this is Analog Artcore. “There has never been a record that sounds much like this one.” - *Douglas Walk*







**TECHNO  
GUEST REVIEWS:  
PASCAL FEOS**

Even after 17 years of packing clubs, changing genres and constant demands for his production and DJ talents, Germany's Pascal Dardoufas hasn't faltered in his quest to please the dancefloor. Under his famous acronym Pascal F.E.O.S. (meaning "From the Essence of Minimalistic Sound"—the "m" was dropped for better pronunciation) Dardoufas has entertained nearly two generations of dance music fans, from his pioneering techno-trance aliases Resistance D (on Harthouse) and Sonic Infusion (on Eye Q), to more recent output on his labels Elektrolux (co-founded with partner Alex Azary), PV and Omychron. It seems as soon as Dardoufas has released another dreamy chill-out project as Aural Float, then he'll return just as quickly with a rhythmic techno number as Stalker, Dune or just F.E.O.S. His 2003 album *Self Reflexion* was a collection of heartfelt statements ("Losin' America," "Flashed Back"), and we can expect a similarly intimate new album from the busy engineer any day. In the meantime, he's excited about his latest single ("The biggest tune I produced this year!"), "Further & Further" on Level Non-Zero, which he describes as "a fusion between DJ International records and Bobby Konders' 'Nervous Acid.'" Here's some more singles F.E.O.S. is hyped on. *Derek Grey*  
www.pascalfeos.de

**KONRAD BLACK & GHOSTMAN MEDUSA SMILE** Wagon Repair/CAN/12  
My favorite tune at the moment. A great follow-up to his single "Draconia" by the one like Todd Shillington (Konrad Black). Minimal tech house with male vocals. Sounds similar to his labelmate Mathew Jonson's style. Massive! *Pascal F.E.O.S.*

**TROY PIERCE HORSE NATION** Minus/CAN/12  
Minimal techno at its best. Just basic 4/4 drums with an excellent arrangement and tricky snare programming. Perfectly minimized! *Pascal F.E.O.S.*

**SWEETN CANDY & RUFUS DUNKEL ALL MY EYE** Opossum/GER/12  
Opossum is a quality German label and "All My Eye" is a minimal and groovin' track. It's like a DJ tool with plenty of echo effects. The perfect sound after 5 a.m. *Pascal F.E.O.S.*

**JEFF SAMUEL  
2000 FLUSHES** Logistic/FRA/12  
**SASCHA FUNKE  
BOY** Bpitch/GER/12

The common link between these two singles: understatement. Although Samuel's single includes re-issued tracks from 2000 and Funke's are brand new, both artists explore warm, linear techno rhythms and sedate instrumentation. Samuel's sparse, reverberating percussive effects and fluttering synths are a mirror of Funke's own funky acid minimalism. Play Samuel's single at 11 p.m.; Funke's is ready for action at a feverish 2 a.m. as the pills start to take effect. *Tomas Palermo*

**LUCI  
IDEAL POUR DIRE JE T'AIME** Morris Audio/GER/12  
Fresh from Montreal's jazz-fused techno scene, this laptop duo delivers their first minimal-oriented release. As ring-modulated vocal snippets rest atop subdued bass stabs, an elastic piano-permeated groove settles the mood. Come for the funky vibe, stay for the shifty compositional technique. *Praxis*

**TACTIK  
CHUNKY MONKEY** Frequent/SPN/12  
Growling with dancefloor fury, drop this peak time monster at crucial club moments only! Opening with



**HIP-HOP  
GUEST REVIEWS:  
BENI B**

I'm sure there are a few authentic hip-hop connoisseurs left, but the majority of rap fans seem to be hypnotized by bling and even esteemed culture critics like the *Village Voice* are enamored with the every move of Purple City and Foxy Brown. Does anyone still love H.E.R.? Beni B does. He's the owner of the West Coast's most important true hip-hop indie, ABB Records, home to Defari, Dilated Peoples, Cesar Comanche and The Sound Providers. Founded in 1997, ABB has taken its namesake—Always Bigger and Better—to heart, issuing important albums by Little Brother and Maspyke and spawning the ABB Soul imprint (home to Lizz Fields, Peven Everett and Mark de Clive-Lowe). "We listen to 99.9% of all the music sent to the office," Beni says. "It's all about the grind, and we stay on ours." With a business mind as sharp as his hip-hop ears, Beni says he's in it for the long haul. "We are one of the few hip-hop indies that has graduated artists to the next level. We aren't goin' anywhere." Here are his top three tunes. *Phil Phloe*  
www.abbrecords.com

**RED ROCK G'S LIKE US** unreleased/US/CD-R  
Produced by Evidence, this 12" from these Jacksonville, FL-based emcees adds an interesting flavor to the well-seasoned Dirty South mix. It's hood, but hip-hop raw and in the street. "G's" has been running on Sirius radio for the past three months. *Beni B*

**G.U.N. THE GREEDY ULTIMATE EP** World Of Beats/US/12  
This joint is off Soulman's new label, World Of Beats. Record diggin' cats will remember Soulman from his legendary "World of Beats" column in *Rap Sheet* circa '94-'95, and his *Ultimate Beat* tape series. I would've liked to hear the emcees give themselves a bit more room on the delivery to take advantage of Soulman's boardwork. Good to see ya puttin' the collection to use, Phil! *Beni B*

**PLANET ASIA THE MEDICINE** Battle Axe/CAN/12  
Produced by Evidence, Asia is an emcee's emcee. His "Place of Birth" 12" on ABB (1999) is one of my favorites on our label. Once again, 93706 and 90291 team up to make classic hip-hop music. The b-side wins again with "Stick and Move" featuring Prodigy. This is the first release from Asia's *The Medicine*, due out spring 2006. *Beni B*

**THE COUP  
MY FAVORITE MUTINY** Epitaph/US/12  
After years of bubbling under and pissing off the Feds, Oakland, CA's The Coup emerges with possibly the finest tracks of their controversial career. Their famous revolutionary rhetoric is intact on "My Favorite Mutiny," and the thoroughly produced soul-drenched rhythm goes well beyond the Kayne standard of a sped-up loop and some handclaps. Bonus track "Laugh, Love..." is a party/radio song for slumpin' thugs who use intelligence to grind to create change. *Tomas Palermo*

**EDAN FEAT. PERCEE P  
TORTURE CHAMBER (CUT CHEMIST REMIX)** Lewis/UK/12  
We haven't heard much of Jurassic 5 beatmaker Cut Chemist on the solo tip in a while, but this single proves the man called Lucas MacFadden still has a powerful arsenal of vintage drum breaks in his quiver. Matched with Boston's psychedelic funk rapper Edan and lyrical master Percee P, Cut makes the "Torture Chamber" sound extra dank and merciless, with spidery snippets of guitar and razor sharp snare rolls that provoke me to confess: you need this single! *Phil Phloe*

**RZA/MF DOOM  
BIOCHEMICAL EQUATION** Babygrande/US/12  
You'd think this would be a dream combo—the Wu-Tang master and Metal Face!—but the beat (a weak, stringy soul loop) isn't complimented by effective drum programming. And aren't we sick of rappers talking ran-

domly over dusty soul radio songs? The dynamic duo's track doesn't elevate beyond what you've heard before. Flip for Aesop Rock versus Del Tha Funky Homosapien, whose piano-rolling Weatherman-produced track "Preservation" is the one to focus on. *Derek Grey*

**PUMPKINHEAD  
ROCK ON** Soulspazm/US/12  
"Spittin' heat for 10 years and haven't been signed once," says Pumpkinhead of his secure independent status. "Rock On" is P's dedication to all underground artists, from Jean Grae to Mobb Deep, as he explicitly describes in tight verses over Marco Polo's gritty beats. Based on the b-side track, "Swordfish," I get the impression that P's a confident live performer in the vein of Chubb Rock and Chuck D: loud, proud, lyrical and thoroughly hip-hop. *Phil Phloe*

**DOUJAH RAZE  
PLASTIC WORLD** Trilogy/US/12  
DR's self-titled debut album definitely raised more than just eyebrows, it raised his status as one of underground hip-hop's top emerging emcees. The caucasian D.C./Virginia native definitely attracts a college/CMJ backpacker audience, but expertly produced and delivered tracks like "Plastic World" and "No Place" put him in the same league as dope lighter-skinned folks like Evidence and Aesop Rock, as opposed to Em. *Derek Grey*



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## DRUM & BASS GUEST REVIEWS: LEMON D

You thought one of drum & bass's hardest working souljahs was all about super-compressed amen drums and gut-busting subs, right? But Lemon (also known as Kevin King) informs me that his new album, out spring 2006 on his label Valve, will feature folksy crooner Beck. That should prove that no one can pigeonhole the veteran producer, whose classic material for Metalheadz ("Urban Style Music"), V ("Change"), Dread, Chronic and Test solidified the South London bwoy as one of d&b's true architects. King was no slouch in '05 either—he released pounding tracks on V and Hype's True Playaz, while finding time to remix "Thirsty" (Palestar) by O.D.B. and Black Keith (featured on the *Blade Trinity* soundtrack). With his Valve soundsystem partner Dillinja, King says his future is full of "premium" projects. Here are his recommended plates. *DJ Chopper*  
[www.valverecordings.com](http://www.valverecordings.com)

### TC DEEP Dub/UK/12

A rolling, bouncy number from TC here—it's got it all! Nice jump-up flavor with fun vocals throughout the track (i.e. "Stop looking at those girls and do your job!") A producer that's not taking the music or himself too seriously and not afraid to add some jokes into a track. *Wicked! Lemon D*

### CLIPZ & DIE THUNDER Full Cycle/UK/12

The title says it all! The intro kicks in with bongos layered with looped Tali vocals and violin strings that drop to a heavy, heavy pitched bass which jumps out at you and punches you straight in the face! One of my current favorites for sure! I love bending basses—if you do too, you will not be disappointed. *Lemon D*

### SHY FX FEELING Soundboy/UK/12

This is one bad-ass vocal track! Undoubtedly one of the biggest anthems out there at the moment, it's a sing-a-long classic. Be sure to get out there and buy it! Check the separate 12" with the Incognito remix on there, a lovely take on the original. *Lemon D*

### NEO/KINETIC

#### R U READY

Key Note/UK/12

Neo—not to be confused with the garage and hard trance artists of the same name—has previous releases on Sensor as well as the debut offering from Key Note. Neo's sound reminds me of US producer DJ UFO; they share a similar bleak, futuristic view of music, pushing the boundaries of drum programming and outer space atmospherics. Both Neo's "RU" and Kenetic's "Hypnotech" do their damndest to get the blood pumping. *DJ Chopper*

### ALLIED FORCE

#### SUMMER MADNESS

Just Noyze/UK/12

MC GQ's label comes with a solid two-song effort, and it's the third release for the imprint from jazz-leaning Allied Force. The cover of Kool & The Gang's silky "Summer Madness" is reverent without diluting the jungle format. B-side "Highly Strung" is my choice track; it's built with strummed jazz guitar, filtered vocals and, as the title suggests, a surging string section. EF makes it sound effortless. *Derek Grey*

### KLUTE & PIETER K

#### MATERIAL TRIP

Commercial Suicide-Offshore/UK/12

Commercial Suicide and Offshore team up again with another slab of split futurism. Klute and Pieter K join forces and deliver the powerful and moody "Material Trip," with somber, church-style chanting that hovers over slapping breaks and slippery bass. The Offshore side discovers the untapped Martsman, who delivers one of the most original d&b compositions of late with the refreshingly eccentric "Ago." *Ryan Romana*

### SABRE & KASE

#### THINGS & RICHES

Emcee/UK/12

Probably no year since 1997 has seen more original drum & bass music spring from seemingly nowhere. Add Sabre & Kase to the list of production names that made 2005 a little nicer. "Gift You Gave" is glittering, unconscious, dreamstate-made music. The drum programming is subtle, as wispy melodic sounds float in and out of a pad-heavy mix. "Things & Riches" takes a cinematic, string section-driven approach and acts as a dancefloor counterpart to the other song's headphone disposition. *Tomas Palermo*

### BIZZY B

#### SCIENCE EP

Planet Mu/UK/CD

Now that the old-school choppage revival is in full effect, it's only appropriate to welcome back hardcore junglist Bizzy B with his "Science" EP. Brace yourself for the breakneck rhythms and rave stabs of "Merda Style 2004" and "Afraid of the Dark," while "Deep in my Soul" and "Strength" provide more musical and jump-up flavors without ever losing sight of the rinse out. *Ryan Romana*

### DJ MARKY & XRS

#### DISTANT LOVER

Innerground/UK/12

### ROY AYERS

#### MYSTIC VOYAGE (DJ MARKY & XRS REMIX)

BBE/UK/12

The Brazilian duo Marky & XRS has avoided flooding the market with mediocre tunes, so when a new track or two pops up, you're assured of a quality plate. That's the case with "Distant Lover" (a single they share with newcomer Bungle)—the signature melodies, flutes, echoing vocal snippets and saturated Rhodes give the track an emotional, hands-in-the-air richness. They don't let jazz-funk vibesman Ayers down either on their

outstanding touch up of his "Mystic Voyage." Unfortunately, the soulful track is only a part of the UK *Roy Ayers Remixed* set; Stateside DJs snag the import! *Tomas Palermo*

### FANU

#### JASON

Thermal/US/12

After a short hiatus, Thermal Recordings returns to the scene with a healthy dose of leftfield twelves. Finland's Fanu steps up with a cinematic approach on "Jason," combining his signature claustrophobic drum edits with haunting *Friday the 13th* samples and minimal bass grooves. Flip for "Witchcraft," which runs in a similar vein and includes a short and sweet downtempo breakdown. *Ryan Romana*

### BREAKAGE

#### ASK ME

Bassbin/UK/12

Rewind alert! Breakage's "Ask Me" revolves around natty pleading vocals before dropping in with a weighty bassline and the heaviest of amens that are chopped, blended and spit back out for your enjoyment. Contrasting nicely on the flip is Alias' "Cosmos," which rolls over thick grooves and a luscious bed of bass. *Ryan Romana*

### NOISIA VS DRIFTER

#### BRAIN STITCH

Shogun Audio/UK/12

DJ Friction's label presents two fresh talents. Noisia sews together a lumbering techstep track that crackles with sound of electric wires snapping and Formula One-speed drum loops. Drifter mellows out the mayhem with a disco string-soaked stepper that flows tunefully, but has a rhythm built for the peak hours. *DJ Chopper*



MIDAS/  
BRETT JOHNSON  
MAGIC EARS EP  
UMA



BLACKSOUL  
I GOT SOUL  
(JT DONALDSON RMX)  
DEEPFUNK



JOVONN  
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## BREAKS GUEST REVIEWS: HOTFLUSH

To create and spin dubstep music is to live and breathe bass. Once an offshoot of the commercial UK garage scene, dubstep has evolved into an ethnic-tinged and bass-driven soundscape that is a reflection of London's underground culture and lifestyle. North of Thames DJs El Sid and Paul Rose started the Hotflush imprint to focus on breakstep, dubstep and broken beats in the 135-to-140 BPM range. In just 18 months, they have managed to make a lot of noise with releases by Toasty, Search and Destroy, Distance, Slaughter Mob and Eric H and have won critical accolades from [www.dubplate.net](http://www.dubplate.net) in 2004 (Best Label, Best Single: "The Knowledge"). With 10 releases forthcoming—including recent singles from Scuba and Boxcutter, and remixes of some of their biggest tunes from scene stalwarts Toasty and Vex'd—Hotflush is set to make an even bigger splash. Check their latest hot cuts. *DeepSix* [www.hotflushrecordings.com](http://www.hotflushrecordings.com)

### LOEFAH GOAT STARE DMZ/UK/12

Digital Mystikz has really pulled out the stops this year with their DMZ label and massively popular night of the same name. Sometime collaborator Loeffah comes up with a couple of bangers for their sixth 12", mixing up the bass with the more breaky aspects of dubstep and the usual mad atmospherics that have made these guys so popular. *El Sid and Paul Rose*

### DISTANCE FALLEN Boka/UK/12

We're huge Distance fans at Hotflush. He's a big talent who comes out with some really diverse and experimental stuff. "Fallen" is Distance on a proper dubstep tip—massive bass, half-step drums and an incredibly haunting Moroccan vocal sample. Big tune! *El Sid and Paul Rose*

### SKREAM REQUEST LINE Tempa/UK/12

*Request Line* is the grime/dubstep crossover tune of the year. Any grime nut that heard Dizzee Rascal riding this on Logan's show on Kiss 100 must've been scratching their head for a few bars, but it's caught on in a big way. Proof that you can have melodies without sounding cheap. *El Sid and Paul Rose*

### THE WIDEBOYS

#### PIRATE SELECTAS

Garage Jams/UK/2x12

Hyped on the Wideboy's website as "Part 1 & 2 of a new series of exclusive cuts that have been spun on the UK's underground radio stations," this doublepack showcases the Boys' electrofunk and breaks influences in spades. From the old school vibe of "Tip Toe The Raver" to the marimba basslines of "Swing Yo Body" (complete with vocoded vocals), no UKG DJ should be without this. Absolutely essential. *DeepSix*

### MOVE YA! & STEVE LAVERS

#### THE RIDE

#### NITRO

#### THE CRACK

Audiobug/UK/12

Trance was last year's big beat, and now breaks is this year's trance. These records both take notes from underground trance music's intense builds and crashing cymbals, but draw on funky drum loops (and a lot of familiar hip-hop samples) to compliment their sweeping bass rumble. Nitro's "This Way" is admirable, dropping Finger Lickin' or Bocht-style nu-skoool business with plenty of head-turning sounds. *Derek Grey*

### JHZ/KOMA + BONES

#### TCR 100

TCR/UK/12

The two tracks selected to preview Thursday Club's 100th release show that, while considered primarily a break-beat label, Rennie Pilgrim's concern could easily expand in many auditory directions—from indie rock through chill



## FUTURE JAZZ GUEST REVIEWS: SINDEN

John Lennon famously sang that a working class hero was something to be. So let's hear it for the in-the-trenches laborers/musicians who don't give up their day jobs. Graeme Sinden is one of those talented toilers, a former public relations officer (and current A&R man) for London's Loungin records. Now his creative side is seeing the light of day in the form of the "Sinden" EP—a four-track gem on Loungin (home to Solid Groove, Trevor Loveys and Jesse Rose). A man of open-minded tastes, which run from house to jungle to hip-hop and broken beat, Sinden cut his teeth DJing at Shoreditch clubs like 333, Herbal and Notting Hill Arts Club. Recently Mr. Sinden and partner A. Brucker posted their first major label remix (for Island), polishing Lady Sovereign's "Hoodie." Brucker & Sinden have forthcoming collaborations with Solid Groove, in addition to launching a label to showcase new MCs and singers. We put Sinden's able mind to the task of choosing three dope new tracks. *Derek Grey* [www.lounginrecordings.com](http://www.lounginrecordings.com)

### AMADOU & MARTIN COULIBALY (ASHLEY BEEDLE MIX) Giant Step/US/12

Ashley Beedle on remix duty for West African duo Amadou and Martin. Superbly handled, it keeps the original's charm and vocals and succeeds in pleasing the modern dancefloor. Neat, shuffling percussion assisted by an enchanting blues guitar and bassline, which heightens before breaking down and firing up again. Great Afro-funk for the box. *GS*

### COLDCUT EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL (SOLID GROOVE DUB) Ninja Tune/UK/12

A good opener to a set, this starts off as a slow burner, held together by a plodding beat that grinds alongside some revving FX, vocal snippets and a steady b-line. The track holds you in suspense before letting off distinctive marching broken beats, electric guitars and dubbed out vocals. *GS*

### AL GREEN LOVE & HAPPINESS (RE EDIT) Shoes/UK/12

Two very inventive re-edits from the mysteriously titled Shoes label. Both sides are great, but the flavor for me is on the b-side—a downtempo dubby re-edit/remix driven by some chopped claps, sleigh bells and drum loops. The guitar is dreamy and the stripped-down vocal equally so. A real atmospheric and imaginative remix of a soul classic. *GS*

### THE FUSION EXPERIENCE

#### SCARAMUNGA

Buff/SCOT/12

Jazz, funk and soul are alive, well and flourishing in Glasgow, Scotland, home of Buff—a party, label and soon, a new music venue. Spawned from their capacity club nights, Buff regulars The Fusion Experience came together around the flying fingers of organist Raymond Harris, whose quintet recently added gospel back-up singers. "Scaramunga" sounds like Latin funksters War belting out a feisty Jimmy Smith number. Fellow Scotty Sidewinder proffers a wicked Afrobeat rework, and the party is complete. *Julian Orlando*

### THE ELECTRIC INSTITUTE EP

New Religion/NETH/12

At the crossroads of pure electronic dance music, where "tasteful techno" and future jazz meet, is a place called *The Electric Institute*, which is actually a fantastic 16-song comp on Dutch label New Religion. This EP sees two of the collection's best dancefloor cuts—by Domu and Stacey Pullen respectively—relish in the freedom of both sparkingly retro and ultra-digital synths, and swinging rhythmic programming. Detroit and London shake hands and continue on their journey. *Tomas Palermo*

### ELIOT LIPP

#### IMMEDIATE ACTION 10: CUSHMAN

Hefty/US/12

Three succulent jazz/funk-inspired hip-hop tracks heavy on the sampler manipulation from LA's rising talent Eliot Lipp (that's one "l," two "p"s). For his Immediate Action series single, Lipp sifts through his early Mo' Wax and Ninja Tune singles for insight, then

charts his own path, using snippets of old jazz records and excellent original keyboard trickery as his compass. Fat beats for a starvin' world. *Roar Shack*

### SABRINHA MALHEIROS

#### CAPOEIRA VAI

Far Out/UK/12

Fantastic Brazilian vocalist Malheiros gets her samba songs chopped and rebuilt into both a vibrant uptempo dance track by Spiritual South ("Capoeira Vai") and a toned-down Afro-thumper by Quantic ("Passa"). Where SS's drums and percussion are unquestionably a Carnival parade for the ears and feet, Quantic's Will Holland captures a misty rainforest trek with his affected guitars, flutes and dubby production. *Tomas Palermo*

### PLATINUM PIED PIPERS

#### SHOTGUN

Ubiquity/US/12

To these ears, super-producer JayDee ain't really built for rappin'. Talking all that hardknock simplicity on "Shotgun" about what he's gonna do to your wife, he nearly ruins PPP's fine soul horns beat—I'll stick to the instrumental instead. For the lover in me, "Fever" is a radio-worthy slice of weighty R&B. DJ Spinna's mix captures its essence, taking the song's refined heat and adding quivering, back-forth hip-hop beats, lovely keys and pads. *Hector Cedillo*



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## THE DOWN-BEAT DIASPORA BY RICO "SUPERBIZZEE" WASHINGTON

GETTING YOU UP ON THE SHARPEST SOUL, FUNK AND R&B.

December already? I must have pulled a Rip Van Winkle. Despite my slumber, I managed to collaborate with the Oompah-Loompachs at Santa's workshop on some things. We scoured this great land from coast to coast in search of the finest and fanciest of funk, soul and everything in between to provide you a nice segue into the New Year. So whether you've been naughty or nice, scrawl these joints on your stocking stuffer wish list. Happy holiday to all y'all!

West Coast: The LA underground scene never ceases to amaze. Fresh from a string of rousing performances at CMJ, co-ed concept duo **J'Davey** releases the "Beauty In Distortion" EP (jdaveybaby.com). What's a J'Davey? Ask your mama! Or simply imagine an aborted joint side project by **Prince** and **Pharrell**, bathed in carnal delicacies and glitchy, cyber funk and fronted by salacious chanteuse Briana "Jack" Cartwright and extraterrestrial beatsmith Brook D'Leau. Translation: the game ain't ready.

From the perpetual genius of **Madlib** comes the offshoot of his jazzier Yesterday's New Quintet incarnation, Sound Directions. On *The Funky Side Of Life* (Stones Throw), Loopdigga and friends freak 11 tracks of off-kilter proto-funk in sublime ADD fashion. Definitely worth the lunch money.

Nudge up a little further north to Seattle and get a taste of young soulstress **Choklate's** new single "Waitin'" (Kajmere Sound). Sporting horn jabs jacked from James Brown's "People Get Up And Drive Your Funky Soul" and deconstructed by fellow Seattle-ite **Vitamin D**, this joint is strrraight ear candy! When her album drops, watch the Richter scale.

East Coast: In honor of their recent **Mizell Brothers** retrospective, Blue Note Records blesses vinyl junkies with a throwback 12" slab. Side one features **Gary Bartz's** "Funked Up," laced with ethereal vocals by the late **Syreeta**. On the flip side, the Mizells revisit and twerk their original production of **Donald Byrd's** 1970s classic, "Think Twice."

Meanwhile, in Secaucus, NJ, Masters At Work's **Kenny "Dope" Gonzales**—in cahoots with UK northern soul icon **Keb Darge**—has been feverishly selling soul obscurities by the pound via their label Kay-Dee Records. Hot off their presses come the 7-inch funk knots "Take It Easy" by **Brass Construction** and "Get It Right (pt. 1 & 2)" by **Rickey Calloway & His N.T. Express**. Somebody open a window, it's too damn funky in here!

Down South: after pouring his hot, buttered soul vocals over one of 2004's most lauded underground records, it's only logical that North Calakak native **Darien Brockington** would wanna go for dolo. So folks who kept **Foreign Exchange's** "Come Around" on repeat should definitely check Darien's EP, "The Feeling" (darienmusic.com), featuring backdrops by Nicolay, Vitamin D and Symboly One. Now for joints to watch for in '06: **James Poyser & ?uestlove's Randy Watson Experience** project; **Sa-Ra's** G.O.O.D., Ubiquity and Rawkus projects; **Erykah Badu, Zap Mama** and **Caron Wheeler's** collaboration, **Zombie/Mandingo**; and new cyber soul crooner, **Erik Rico**.



Erykah Badu



Pharrell



## AFTER SILENCE BY MARTIN DE LEON II

EXPLORING THE OUTER ORBITS OF LEFTFIELD, ELECTRONIC MUSIC AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Winter is here and music has gotten icier, more internal and weirder. Out there beats are coming from everywhere: Chicago post-rockers, Bay Area sentimentalists and Scottish hermits. Machines need warmth like all of us, and not since Kraftwerk's busybody days has such rich electronic tinkering been so hot. And it won't stop—unless the electricity goes out.

What's never going out (of style, at least) is post-rock! Portland's **Nudge** proves that progress wears a beard with their brilliant 12-inch for Community Library. Double-sided hotness here with "Stack," a wonderfully sloppy cut where mid-tempo lazy drums feel up some gurgling synthesizers. "Div" is slower and crisper, with a molasses bassline and pretty washes of ambient moans that should make it illegal for Oregonians to listen to this while driving.

Chugging along like **Mogwai** on speed is **The Timeout Drawer**—a trio marked by loud gee-tars and fuzzy electronics. Their 7", "The Exorcist" (Consumer's Research and Development), has the rawness and compositional depth to make me interested in distortion pedals again. Clicks and ticky-tack splinters of noise begin the two-minute track; slowly, a wonderfully addictive riff throws it all out of balance, turning it into a headbanging beauty that ends in a fuzzy cloud.

Then, you remember: **Christ**. Not the bearded, sandaled one—the hermetic, occasional **Boards of Canada** collaborator who drops gems from Scotland. 2003 saw the release of his pretty good album, *Metamorphic Reproduction Miracle*, but little has been heard from him...until now, as he releases the

"Seeing and Doing" EP (Benbecula). "Fragile X" is gentle and claustrophobic, with spliced vocals getting mushy beneath hazy sheets of ambience. Like Boards in their heyday, Christ meshes off-key synthesizers with DJ Premier beats that make LSD heads want to wear bling.

Back to neverending things, like suffering (and Republican administrations). Bay Area mokey wonder kids **Xiu Xiu** and hairy hipster **Devendra Banhart** swapped songs and came back with the an amazing split 7" on SRC Records. Lovely pitter-patter beats flutter beneath Jamie Stewart's agonizingly beautiful voice on "Body Breaks," while a Smiths bassline turns Banhart's folk into a synthetic masterpiece. Devendra, on the other hand, belts out a sing-along Dixie gem, turning Xiu Xiu's morose "Support our Troops OH!" into a soulful lullaby through heartfelt wails. Penciled trees on the cover sleeve, with leaves falling, remind you that everything ends.

That's okay, says Chicago's **Anomaly**. Soundtracks to sunny days abound, but those that harmonize winters are less common. "Chill," a wonderful 45 on SGE, makes you want to stay inside, gluing a wet funk drum sample together with **Four Tet** aesthetics. "Dust," on the other hand, is like indie bliss as '70s synths and a shrieking trumpet make out. Hey, machine heartbeats always sound better bundled up.



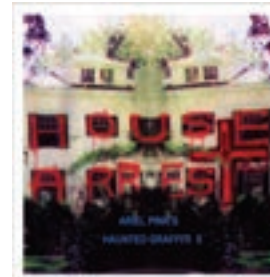
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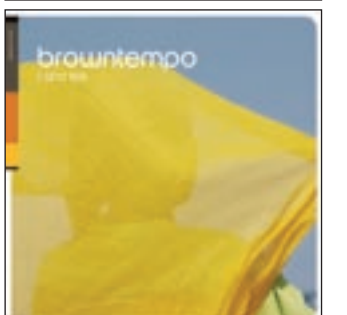
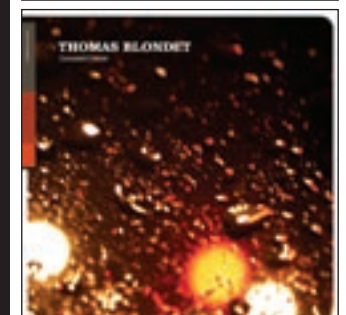
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**LUCKY 13**  
BY TOPH ONE

Well thank Christ 2005 is almost over. I looked back and I swear, I couldn't find a redeeming shred of decency in this past year. Besides riding about 2,500 miles on my bike, I feel like a worthless sack of shit. Of course, there were some mighty fine sunsets out at Ocean Beach. And that great blue heron chilling on the Russian River. Jud Bergeron and Samantha's beautiful wedding at the historic War Memorial building. And I guess I read a few good books. Damn, thank God for the little moments. Happy holidays y'all, and here's to a better one next year... It's gotta get better, right? Tell me it gets better... Lie if you have to, just feed me eggnog and pop in *The Station Agent*—I can make it another year, for sure.

**1) JUGOE "THE RUSTBELT" EP**  
(Bastard Jazz/US/12EP)

Man, I got big love for the Ohio scene, and this cat right here is making some of the choicest downtempo cuts around. "Ohio City" is dope, "Devil Woman" is even hotter, but then "90 West" comes along and just *clears the bases*. Best one yet, homie.

**2) BALKAN BEAT BOX "BULGARIAN CHICKS"**  
(Jdub/US/12EP)

The world needs more half-naked freaks, swinging from the rafters, listening to crazy shit like this and dancing like wild children without a care at all. Can we all strive for that in 2006?

**3) PAL JOEY "LOOP D'LOOP #19"**  
(Loop D'Loop/US/12EP)

From house to hip-hop and damn near everything in between, Joseph Longo has done it all over the years, and this latest installment of the Loop D'Loop series showcases his trademark warmth and deep New York vibe.

**4) ROY AYERS "FUNK IN THE HOLE" (REMIXES)**  
(Rapster/GER/2x12)

Does Roy Ayers know that I love his music so much I made a drink up in honor of him? The Roy: Malibu, vodka and pineapple juice in a pint glass over ice. Tiny umbrella is optional. Platinum Pied Pipers and Nicolay pay their musical respects on this hot 12".

**5) DJ JOHN "MASH-UP MAYHEM"**  
(Replicant Music Trading Corp/US/12EP)

A copyright lawyer's wet dream—with more samples per square inch than *Paul's Boutique*, y'all better grab this one the minute you see it. "It Takes Two 2 Kiss" and "Just A Friendly Medley" are the bomb.

**6) KABANJAK MEETS PROTASSOV FEAT. THE JUNGLE BROTHERS "GROW"**  
(Switchstance/GER/12EP)

Funky hip-hop breaks for the sweaty bar scene, with none other than the JB's guesting on vocals on "Cruise Control." Sweet remix of "Cucumber Lounge" on the flipside, too.

**7) KID GUSTO "HEAT BEATS"**

(True Grooves/US/12EP)

Fuck me! I haven't stopped playing this guy's first 12" and dude's already got another banger out!

**8) V/A IMPULSIVE**

(Impulse/US/2xLP, CD)

It's a beautiful day when labels such as Blue Note, Verve and Impulse open their expansive catalogs up to today's young guns, and when you hear the pounding beat of RZA's take on Charles Mingus' "II B.S." or Gerardo Frisina's ska-like bounce on Dizzy's "Swing Low," you'll know that somewhere, someone finally made a RIGHT decision.

**9) TIBURON "SHAKE ME"**

(Coma/US/12)

Nice and dirty electro-house from the Landshark—Lance Desardi on this feisty new imprint from Coco Machete. Fuzzy '80s bassline with aggro male vocals = dancefloor mayhem for New Year's Eve.

**10) V/A SEARCHING FOR SOUL**

(Luv N'Haight/US/LP, CD) Fourteen boss jams from the gritty streets and backroads of Michigan with killer liner notes by Andrew Jervis of Ubiquity Records. You'll never find these anywhere else, so take advantage!

**11) PUMPKINHEAD "SWORDFISH"**

(Soulspace/US/12)

Ruff Brooklyn rhymes from this street vet, fresh off tour with Jean Grae, and featuring Rocky Marciano and Archival on two hard versions of this joint produced by Marco Polo.

**12) YOKO SOLO THE BEEPS**

(QuakeTrap/US/CD)

From the detritus of the brilliant Pancake Circus comes QuakeTrap Collective, of which Yoko Solo is a marauding, menacing tentacle. "The Beeps" would be his bleeding faucet of beats and squishy sounds, fermented in some dank Mission District kitchen far from fresh air and natural light. I recommend a shot of Fernet.

**LUCKY 13) SAN FRANPSYCHO: WET AND WRECKLESS**

(Powerlines Prod/US/DVD)

All the saucy gals, fistfights, Harleys and 40 drinking one expects to find at Kelly's Cove on San Francisco's Ocean Beach, and some bad-ass City boys tearing up the surf. Look for *Down the Line* in limited theatrical release from this Half Moon Bay crew, who are also responsible for *100 Foot Wednesday*.

TophOne's mix CD *Live Loud & Dirty* is available at [www.fabric8.com/redwine](http://www.fabric8.com/redwine). Hear him every Wednesday at the RedWine Social at Dalva in SF.



Lance Desardi



Roy Ayers



Balkan Beat Box



Pal Joey

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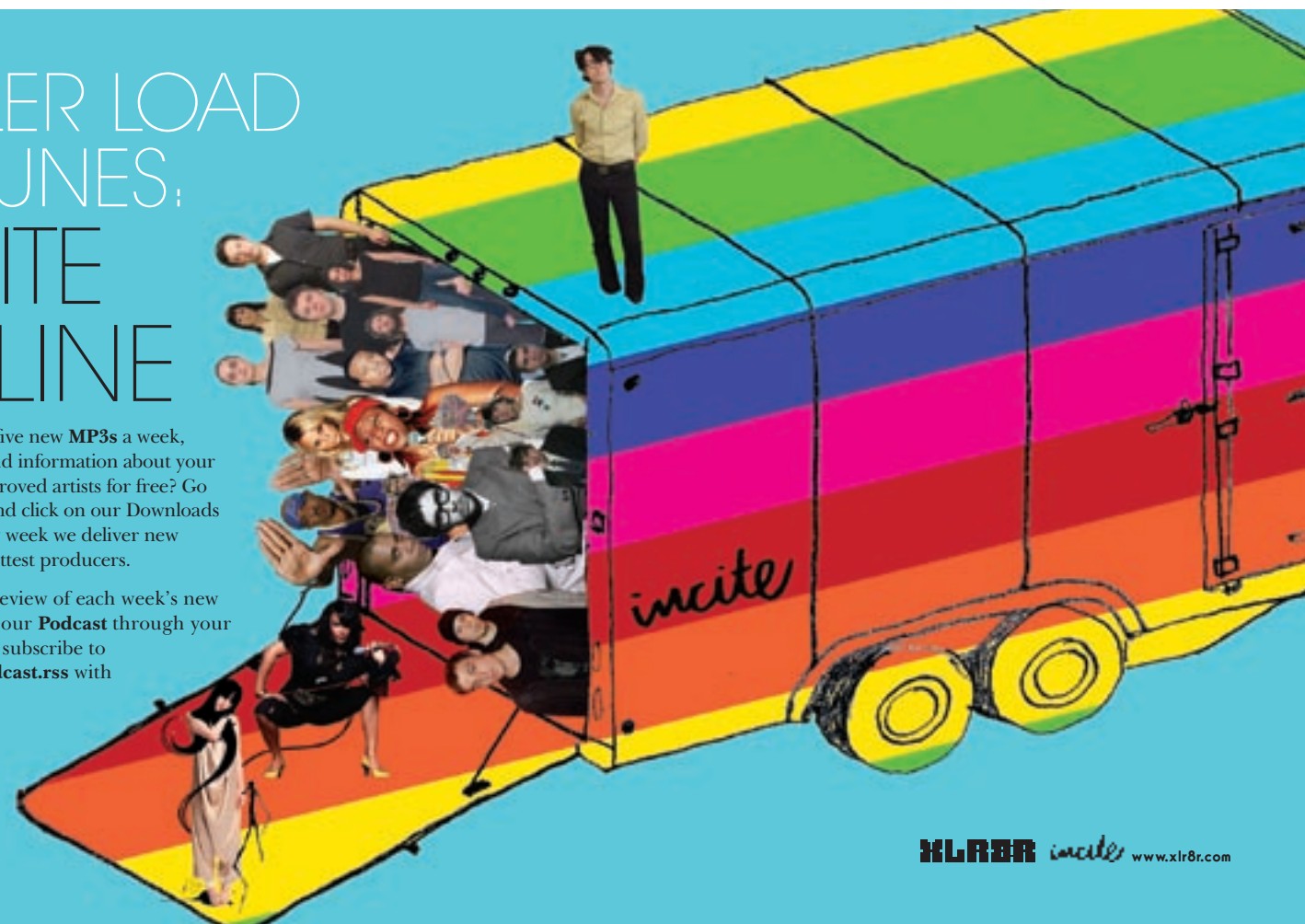
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FOUR FRENCH DJS USE NOISE AND CLASSICAL MUSIC TO TURN TURNTABLISM ON ITS HEAD.

WORDS: TOMAS PALERMO PHOTO: ELO B (WWW.ELO.AXELIBRE.ORG)

Turntablism has shared a close relationship with avant-garde jazz, classical and experimental music, as deejays have tweaked decks to create expansive compositions that are far from the instrument's hip-hop battle roots. Artists continue to expand the repertoire, from DJ Quest's Live Human band to DJ Radar transcribing scratch notation for orchestras, to turntable experimentalists like Janek Schaefer and Christian Marclay. Add to this continuum four funky weirdos from France: Crazy B, DJ Pone, DJ Need and Little Mike are champion battle deejays who flip the script as Birdy Nam Nam. BNN's compositions draw on France's long history of 20th century classical music, from the work of Claude Debussy and Erik Satie straight through to modern electronic mischief-maker Pierre Henry. The quartet reconfigures beautiful, pastoral music snippets into the realm of turntablism, yet they're still awesome beat jugglers, and their shows balance creativity with rock-the-party antics. With their self-titled debut album (on Kif) finally released and about to do major damage, the foursome sat down to share their live and studio methodologies.

[www.birdynamnam.com](http://www.birdynamnam.com)

**WHAT ROLE DOES EACH MEMBER PLAY WHEN YOU PERFORM? IS ONE DJ A "BASS" AND ANOTHER JUST SCRATCHES?**

We usually switch off different roles, but Mike is doing the drums most of the time. Mike and Need are maybe playing more solos but there are no established rules.

**WHAT BRAND OF TURNTABLES DO YOU USE?**

We use Numark TTX. We need this model because of the pitch (+/-50) and it's perfect to play short notes as we do. Even if Technics MK2 is the preference for many DJs, we cannot play BNN's tracks with it because of those technical aspects.

**DO YOU USE CD TURNTABLES AS WELL?**

We use the Numark CDX but we don't manipulate it like vinyl. We just use it because we can only play four channels at the same time, so we have to play sequences on CD.

**DO YOU USE IT FOR LIVE SHOWS?**

We just use four turntables and a CD player to play sequences that we can't play live. For the moment, we don't use any machines but we don't know what will happen in the future. We started composing tracks with some musicians, then did a few live shows with them and it was really exciting.

**WHAT IS THE CRAZIEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED AT A BIRDY NAM NAM SHOW?**

Nothing really crazy. In Miami, we played in really bad conditions. We thought that Americans were professional in everything they do but we never played in worse conditions than in Miami. Mike threw his record into the crowd because he was really mad.

**WHERE DOES YOUR NAME COME FROM?**

We were part of another crew of DJs called Scratch Aktion Hiro. We won the ITF World Team championship in 2000. Then the crew split but the four of us wanted to keep working together. We had to find a name [for ourselves] when representing France in the DMC World Final in 2002. While watching *The Party* by Blake Edwards, we loved this name and simply decided to perform as Birdy Nam Nam.

**WHAT OTHER TYPES OF FRENCH ART INSPIRE YOU? DUCHAMP, RAVEL, GAINSBURG?**

We all love Gainsbourg, he did so many different things, he never had any restriction or limit. We all have very different influences. Some of us like French singers or composers but they are not really an inspiration in what we do.

**WHO IS THE MOST FASHIONABLE MEMBER OF BNN?**

Little Mike is the most fashionable because he is young and he's still looking for his own style. He looks like a Nirvana fan with long hair and a rock & roll attitude.

**DO YOU HAVE GROUPIES AT YOUR SHOWS?**

We recently realized that there are many girls at our shows. It's true that some of them act like groupies after the show. But we want to be [as big as] The Beatles, so we'll have to wait a little bit!



In Birdy Nam Nam's studio: Numark DXM Pro mixer, Numark TTX turntable, Numark CDX CD turntable, Sennheiser HD25 headphones





## GUEST REVIEW: JAN JELINEK ON TECHNOSAURUS MICROCON 2

MSRP: \$309, [WWW.TECHNOSAURUS.CH](http://WWW.TECHNOSAURUS.CH), [WWW.SCAPE-RECORDS.DE](http://WWW.SCAPE-RECORDS.DE)

In my search for tiny live tools, the **Microcon 2** is a sensational discovery. Formerly manufactured by a one-man Swiss company, bizarrely named Technosaurus, this analog synth component will soon be manufactured by the Berlin-based distributor Schneiders Büro. No bigger than a VHS tape, the unit has a distinctive mid-'90s raver camouflage design. To play the Microcon simply scratch your fingernails on the front panel while turning the buttons. After one month you'll have your own private monophonic bass-synth design without doing any extra work. The Microcon is absolutely basic. No presets, no chance to save your edits; just frequency and wave-shape control for LFO, an envelope generator on the VCA and a low-pass VCF. The whole box is focused on sound, which is warm and punchy, comparable to similar device the Micromoog. It's like carrying a vintage synth in your pocket. *Jan Jelinek*



## GEMINI DJ iKEY

MSRP: \$229.99, [WWW.GEMINIDJ.COM](http://WWW.GEMINIDJ.COM)

Almost as universal as the common cold (only nicer), the USB (universal serial bus) connection is perhaps the most utilized computer and electronic interface. From iPods to cameras, and even high-end DJ mixing consoles, the USB port has improved data-transfer possibilities. Smaller than a deck of cards, the battery-powered Gemini **iKey** is a tiny, portable USB recording device to record DJ sets or mixes and quickly transfer them to an iPod or computer for playback. Thought you rocked the club with your wicked dubplate set? Rewind your mix as an MP3 or WAV file and confirm your dopeness. Featuring easy dual-RCA inputs, you can monitor the recording volume or easily dump a mix file if you mess up. More than another needless iPod add-on, iKey is a smart way to quickly reference your music sets or have instant recall action for enjoyment anytime. *DJ Chopper*



## M-AUDIO TIMEWARP 2600 SOFTWARE SYNTHESIZER

MSRP: \$249.99, [WWW.M-AUDIO.COM](http://WWW.M-AUDIO.COM)

From Herbie Hancock & The Headhunters to the Beastie Boys, Boards of Canada to Tomita, the experts love their modular analog synthesizers. The most popular and versatile of them all is the ARP 2600. Until now, soft synth users could get cabled and freaky with Arturia's fine ARP2600V, a nice virtual take on the source device. But M-Audio partner Way Out Ware's **TimewARP 2600** is the first to be endorsed by 2600 creator Alan R. Pearlman, as well as having its PDF user guide written by the original synth's manual writer Jim Michmerhuizen. Adding to its exclusive features, TimewARP features modulation filters for mics and guitars (with pre-sets to get you started), 8-voice polyphony (absent on the original device) and complete MIDI automation. Add to that brilliant custom patches created by madman Richard Devine and ambient maestro Robert Rich plus P-Funkster Houston Singletary's Parliament-Funkadelic bass set called the Ass Rumbler, and the TimewARP could get this one nation under a groove again. *Tomas Palermo*



## PIONEER CDJ200

MSRP: \$499, [WWW.PIONEERDJ.COM](http://WWW.PIONEERDJ.COM)

The compact disc player market for DJs is dense. Denon, Vestax, Stanton, Numark and Technics all have CDJ models, each with minor performance differences. I know DJs who swear by Denon's club-worthy reliability, and others who value pricepoint and physical shape over bells and whistles. That's why Pioneer's line has always been compelling; they're a leader in the technology (plus the first to offer a portable CDVJ) whose cost and reliability have remained stable. Think of the **Pioneer CDJ200** as the benchmark portable DJ CD player, with features like looping, cue programming, MP3 compatibility, super-fast search with the jog dial and +/-16% tempo change with its smooth pitch-control slider. The 200 is a compact, everyday unit that's equipped with familiar Pioneer remix assist functions (Jet, Zip and Wah) for on-the-fly effects alterations. I used a pair at Burning Man in the Black Rock desert, in a tent during and after a major sandstorm. The fine, alkaline sand particles got into everything (including my mouth) but the players didn't skip or malfunction once. Reliability in extremes makes the investment worth it. *Derek Grey*



## BEST SERVICE LATIN WORLD SOUND LIBRARY PLUS

MSRP: \$199.95, [WWW.SOUNDSONLINE.COM](http://WWW.SOUNDSONLINE.COM)

Audiences have flocked to Afro-Latin and Caribbean rhythms and dances since the early 1950s. Cha-cha, merengue, salsa and mambo are just a few of the styles revered in the past, with bomba, cumbia and reggaeton adding heat more recently. With its super-sized, 4.7 GB collection of samples and sound, and built-in Native Instruments Intakt interface, **Best Service Latin World** is like a Latin band in a box. The hard disc space requirement is a burden, but the sheer variety and mapability of the set is unparalleled; multiple single-hit percussions, guitar and drums are bundled with loops, breaks and polyrhythms. It's a complete deal, and cheaper than a flight to Cuba. *Derek Grey*



### LIVID TACTIC M2

MSRP: \$899.99; WWW.LIVIDINSTRUMENTS.COM

VJs looking for liberation from the glut of gear and cables may have finally found salvation. Livid's **Tactic m2** hardware is an extension of the accompanying software interface; plug it into your USB port and control 10 sliders, six knobs and seven effects triggers. And a bank of buttons keeps 36 individual movie clips at your fingertips for real-time video mixing with input and monitoring on the 4-inch LCD display. The setup combines video triggering, button-based "scratching," source mixing and live camera manipulation, as well as hundreds of effects with which to flip said material. The whole thing weighs about 12 pounds, and the handmade mahogany and maple construction keeps things looking good off-screen as well.

Evan Shamon



### TRAKTOR DJ STUDIO IGNIGHT! AND REASON 3 OVERDRIVE! BOOKS

MSRP: \$29, \$39.99; WWW.COURSEPTR.COM

PDF manuals be damned! Trying to navigate pages of small blinking text when you want to rewire a soft synth or chain up a wicked set of effects patches is a tedious and often technical chore. Close Acrobat Reader, and open a Thompson book instead. For newbies, the *Ignight!* offers simple instruction; for experienced producers, *Overdrive!* will amplify your powers. **Traktor DJ Studio Ignight!** covers all the basics of Native Instruments' powerful virtual DJing program. From set-up to cueing tracks, and through killer techniques like recording, internet broadcasting, using mics and MIDI controllers, this is a "dummies" manual that reads smart. Then ramp up with **Reason 3 Overdrive!**, which unlocks the sublime and complex aspects of the Propellerheads program's new features, like the Combinator and M-Class Mastering suite. If you want to make the most of Reason 3, get your nose in these pages! *Derek Grey*



### IK MULTIMEDIA SONIK SYNTH 2 SOFTWARE SYNTHESIZER

MSRP: \$399; WWW.IKMULTIMEDIA.COM

A new monster stalks the earth. Imagine Reason's Subtractor and Maelstrom synths, plus every conceivable patch for those virtual instruments; now add 50 other company's soft-synths, and a Native Instruments Intakt workstation and you have **Sonik Synth 2**, IK's newest behemoth. With no fewer than 8 GB of patches—5,000 sounds (bass, leads, pads, voices, effects, organ and percussion)—SS2 is practically every necessary electronic sound in one virtual instrument program. From monk choirs to Moogs, mandolins to mallet percussion, and all manner of Prophet, Arp and Rhodes sounds, you could easily ditch your other virtual instruments. Although it's built to work with every major sequencer (ProTools, Cubase, Logic, Digital Performer), I tried the software out in conjunction with Ableton Live 5 on my Apple iBook G4—the CPU drain from the bastard was too much for my machine to handle. On an eMac, G5 or higher-end PowerBook it flew like a Blue Angel. I was able to write and arrange a multi-part song using just the Sonik Synth 2 alone. Thank god it's a friendly beast. *Tomas Palermo*

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# VIS-ED: JO JACKSON

The artist on making drawings of drawings...and positively negative art.

WORDS: VIVIAN HOST IMAGES: JO JACKSON



ABOVE:  
Still from *Victory Over the Sun*, a  
video work in progress

RIGHT:  
Exclusive piece for *XLR8R Vis-Ed*,  
inks and dyes on typing paper

Jo Jackson paints icons. Giant hollow-eyed skulls. Silhouettes of couples fucking. Massive outlines of the United States and China. What do these things all have in common? Cold-hearted menace. Hiding underneath the paintings' façades of straightforwardness and candy colors lies a raging battle between the way things seem to be and the way they really are. Though Jackson's work looks strikingly graphic from far away, up close her brush strokes are jagged. Everything is flat and two-dimensional and lifeless—not a trace of 3D or shadow in sight. And why is there a video animation of a globe that only has the US on it, rotating around and around?

Jackson's work confronts our perception of popular symbols, albeit in a weird, non-threatening way. The same thing happens when you talk to her. I reached her at home in Portland, Oregon, where she recently moved

with her husband, the artist Chris Johanson, and Raisin, a dog so small and poorly genetically engineered that it has to wear a sweater at all times. She was soft-spoken and nice to a fault, and it wasn't until the hour-long conversation was over that I realized how profound and sometimes disturbing the topics were. We lurched from discussing Jackson's distaste for her childhood in Columbia, Maryland, to her formative years as a young artist in San Francisco in the late '90s. Along the way, I learned that she is preoccupied with the boundaries between the fake and the real; that she used to be obsessed with drawing crosses (because it wasn't allowed); and that she likes to listen to TV shows about rape, murder and incest on the radio while she works. "The sitcoms are too dark, though," she confesses. "They're *too* scary. Real family life portrayed in that way gives me the willies."







**When you reflect back on the time you spent in San Francisco, how do you feel it shaped you?**  
It was such a rad place to be a young artist. I think that it was particularly awesome because almost everybody was doing something or making something. I lived in D.C. before that and it felt like you had to prove that you had the right to be creative, whereas in San Francisco it's just every freak making things Lite Brite sculptures or whatever.

**People have quantified that time you were painting in San Francisco—alongside people like Chris Johanson and Barry McGee—as such a ‘scene.’**  
I never felt a part of a scene the way it was talked about from the outside. I was never mentioned as a Mission School person. Most of the people I thought of as my little scene were people that hung out at the Adobe Bookstore.

**It seems like Adobe Bookstore, where you worked in San Francisco, has nurtured so many artists.**  
That place is really rad. The foundational people that hang out there are disenfranchised intellectuals—super politically and historically informed people that are not going for any earthly reward. It makes it a really safe place to rest yourself. You get the feeling that just hanging out and thinking is plenty and it really opens life up. It's really scary to be making [art] and putting your stuff out there all the time—if you take the winning and losing out of it, it makes it really nice.

**Can you mention any things that have directly inspired a painting of yours?**  
There's an autobiography of Beverly Sills called *Bubbles*. She's a Republican opera singer, and it



seems like the whole book is a giant lie—in the way that little kids, when they write journals, say things like, ‘Today, I was the most popular girl in school.’ That is really inspiring and is making me think a lot right now. I think I might be feeling weirdly interested in identity art again—the yuckiest art in the world. [Identity art] is the way art was in the '90s—it's a lot about ‘Who I am and what my place is and being a woman’ or being whatever. It really seemed really tedious and terrible at the time, but now it seems really funny.

**So you're not interested in making identity art as much as you are in making art that comments on it?**  
Maybe. It seems like a lot of times in culture right now we look at something ironically or make art about it ironically—like fake abstract art or that kind of fake gnome music people were making a while ago. But then a few years later, that turns out to be what you really like. I think [my interest in identity art] is a slightly ironic doorway, but maybe that's what I'm really interested in sincerely right now.

**Do you purposely set out to explore themes that are totally different from your personal life and experience?**  
It's weird that all the details would be so opposite, but that maybe I would find this weird core in there—something that unites all of us. [In *Bubbles*], I think that's there in the lying. It just gave me a really personal feeling to tell the story of your life and to bullshit it. I relate to that immediately. [Laughs] One of my deepest senses is that most people are pretty much the same as each other.

**Part of what's so striking about your paintings is that they look precise.**  
I like to have a sort of fake control. I like to cut the icons out and make them fit on top of the painting instead of them melding into the painting. [When you look at my paintings] in print, they look really clear but when you see them in person they are messy and there's a lot of struggle to keep things in their lines and you can see the bumps and the rips. So I think a big part of it is that struggle to be pre-



cise, which calls precision and perfection out as a lie.  
**When you were a kid what was your ideal of beautiful and perfect?**  
Well, *now* I really do have a role model in this guy that hangs out at Adobe. He's a chess player named Steve. He lives really super cheaply and he's super smart; he has an amazing mind that remembers all the books he's ever read and he's not struggling for anything. Maybe not struggling is really the ticket to a certain kind of beauty.

**How do you feel about Ryan McGinness and Geoff McFetridge? All three of you seem to have a similar interest in iconography and a bright color palette, but they seem to come more from a graphic design perspective.**  
I really like Geoff McFetridge's work a lot. I think it's so...nice. (What a great adjective!) I mean, it's sooo comforting and sort of preppy-like public library advertisements from the '70s. It just seems really wholesome to me, and I really like that. I

don't feel like my art is like his art or Ryan's; I wouldn't mind if it was more. Ryan's work seems a lot about the perfection of his body whereas my work is this gross struggle against my body, which refuses to be obedient and refuses to be precise. He makes these things that slip into each other really effortlessly and cleanly and everything knows where it is. Geoff's art seems so much about the ease of making the right mark just happen. It doesn't seem to struggle very hard with itself—it just seems to talk. But it must feel really weird to make something that well. I can hardly make a left turn!

**When did you incorporate video into your show?**  
My first video was four years ago and I made it in Flash. Now I think I'm going to make animation using 16mm. I always wanted [my stuff] to be in motion and the first time I saw it move I fully cried. I never really watched TV growing up but I'm really psyched on animation. It's so fake and imitates life a little more than a drawing does—it really thrills me.

**OPPOSITE PAGE (clockwise from far left):**  
Folding cassettes, 2004-2005;  
Still from *States* video installation, shown at Baronian Francey Gallery (Brussels) and The Lab (SF), 2005;  
Still from *History: The Complete Drawings* video, courtesy Jack Hanley Gallery (SF), 2005;  
Still from *Mysteries of Life Kept Secret* video, courtesy Kavi Gupta Gallery (Chicago) and Jack Hanley Gallery (SF), 2001

**THIS PAGE (clockwise from top left):**  
Label for clothing label Hang, 2005;  
Still from *Land On This* video, 2004;  
‘The Royal Palace of Dahomey’ (left) and ‘The Capital of the Republic of Texas’ sculptures;  
*Moral Sweetness II*, acrylic and gouache on wood, 16”x28”, 2004





Members of The DJ Project gather in the studio after an exciting performance on the main stage of Horizons Unlimited. Back row, standing: DJ Project Director Jeff Feinman, DJ class instructor DJ IZ; Middle row, standing: youth intern Arsenio "Sini" O'Gilvie, production instructor Floatch "Lady Tragic" Garcia, DJ student Christian Roth; Sitting: audio production students Bertha "Mistreat" Argumedo, Michael "Young Mic" Arevalo, Michele Forks and Tony "The Tiger" Pareda

# THE DJ PROJECT

## INNER CITY KIDS GET A SHOT AT MAKING BEATS AND BUILDING A BUSINESS.

WORDS: TOMAS PALERMO PHOTOS: ANA HOMONNAY (WWW.ANAHOMONNAY.COM)

Six-foot-seven Jeff Feinman looks he should be on the basketball court teaching kids to drive the lane and dunk instead of programming beats. But since 2000, geared up in b-boy baggy jeans and tilted Kangol hat, Feinman has been sequestered in the basement of Horizons Unlimited (located at 440 Potrero Street in San Francisco's Mission district), guiding youth to fulfill their music dreams.

It sounds almost too good to be true: The DJ Project is a free music studio available to low-income teens kids and young adults five days a week. During their quarterly 12-week-long cycles, program founder Feinman and graduates of the program teach young men and women how to use music programs like Reason, ProTools and Peak, as well as record vocals in a sound booth. Additionally, students learn DJ skills, write business proposals to fund CDs and explore the legal aspects of a career in music.

"It's an after-school arts program related to hip-hop culture," explains Feinman. "[The kids] work start to finish, from conceptualization to the finished project, learning how to sell records and the business in the process. We also teach kids how to work collaboratively, how to present yourself; we do professional development and performance training."

SF City Hall and other community groups have commended the DJ Project for its professional approach and success at keeping kids away from gang activity. The students themselves live any-

where from just down the block to public housing projects, group homes and homeless shelters. Five years and counting, the Project has expanded to four Bay Area facilities—two in San Francisco, two in Oakland. The latter two programs have played a role in diffusing the territorialism and violence between different Oakland 'hoods.

"We get everyone," says Feinman, "from gang-bangers who want to turn their life around and rap about their transformation to thugs and bling-bling kids to backpackers and nerdy beatmakers who never come out of their rooms but want to interact with other kids." Serving mainly youth 15-26 years of age, Feinman also makes it clear he's trying to reach out especially to women, in order to "make a safe space for them to come and create."

On a typical day, program graduate Juan Guillermo, 21, is helping overdub Young Mic's (Michael Arevalo) hip-hop track using ProTools. The excited MC rushes in and out of the vocal booth barking commands like a seasoned vet to his fellow student engineers: "Turn up the volume! I can't hear myself. I gotta get this down right!" A few feet away, in front of a glowing eMac, Jabulani, 18, puts the finishing touches on a beat he just made, as fellow students practice freestyle rhymes aloud and make comments on the productions at hand. It gets sweaty and claustrophobic in the 10 x 20 foot low-ceilinged studio, but it's the kind of

controlled, directed creative flow that's allowed graduates to produce no less than 15 CDs worth of original tracks in five years.

While the DJ Project's output is strong, the equipment takes a beating. Oxygen8 keyboards and headphones constantly need replacing, the eMacs need upgrades and there are never enough scratch cartridges. But the kids also learn that it's up to them to attract their own investment capitol.

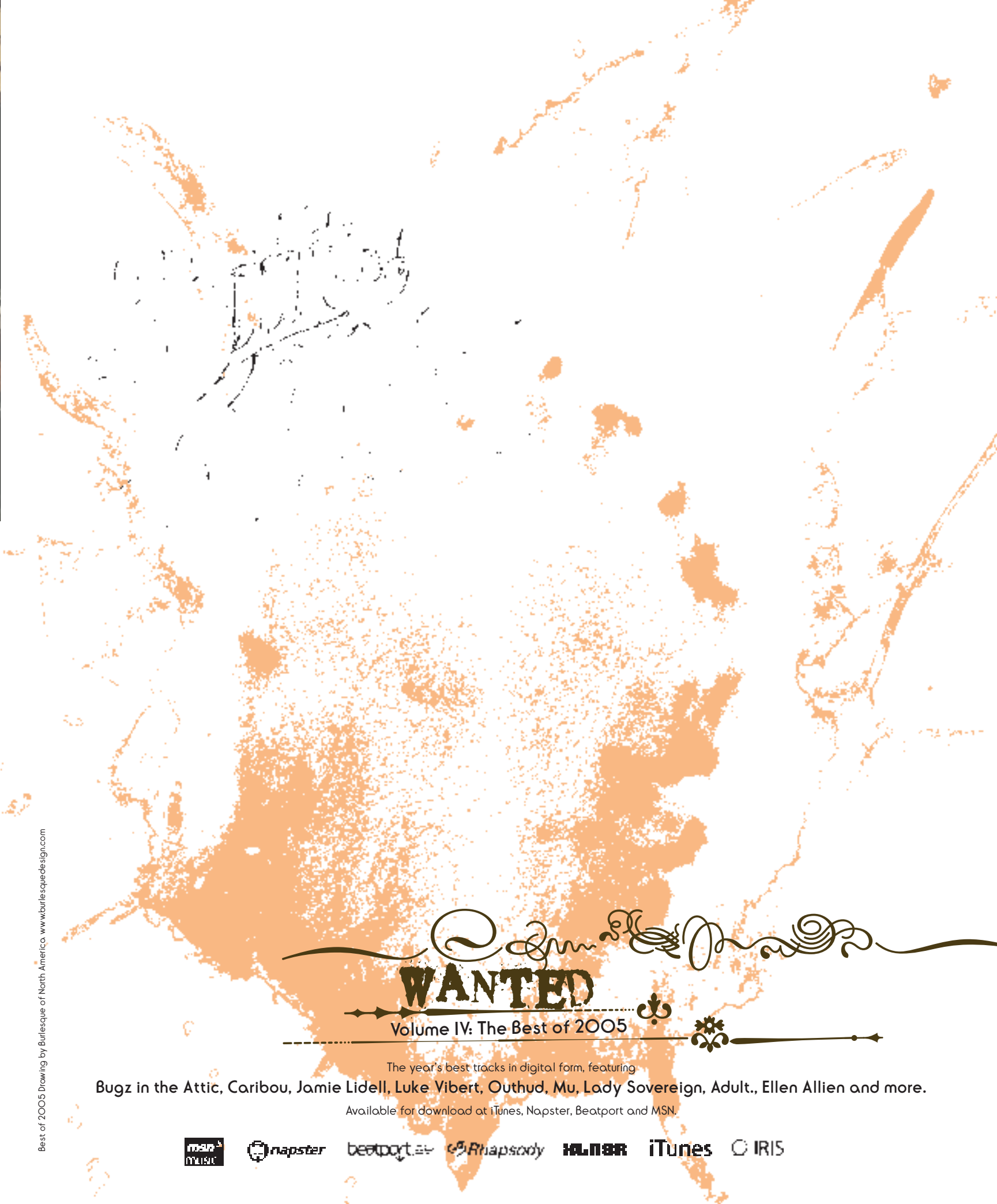
"Currently we're incubating a CD and DVD-duplication business, and we're going to launch that in January," says Feinman of their expanding projects. "We're writing business plans, learning about targeted markets and competitive advantages and writing PowerPoint presentations. I'm into the whole hip-hop entrepreneurship, so I'm also looking for spin-off businesses that don't require a lot of start-up capitol; [things] that are fairly easy to run yet are related to music."

Bay Area artists including DJ Zeph, Azeem, DJ Quest, Zion-I, J-Boogie and Blackalicious have come through to give talks. The artists have sparked the students' interest in learning about the business of recording careers.

Feinman envisions internships as a means of giving his graduates other insights into the music business as a whole. "I want these kids to get internships at a studio, at a label, a magazine, a radio station, so they're exposed to other things other than just being behind the mic." But he's realistic about what the DJ Project can achieve in the long run. "I'm not saying we can necessarily increase their job prospects, but we connect them to something positive."

[www.thedjproject.com](http://www.thedjproject.com)

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